ANNIVERSARY 27th ISSUE

FREE DRAGON TOKENS

NEW D&D 3.5 MONSTER SIZES

DRAGON®

DRAGON 20 MAGIC ANCIENT SPELLS

CHANGE THE WORLD
UNLEASH
Magical Storms

PAGE 52 MINDFLAYER ARSENAL

PAGE 104 BE YOUR DM'S Best Friend

PLUS:
DEADLY MONSTER COMBOS

40 DRACONIC ITEMS

100% OFFICIAL DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®

$5 04 03 N
LE VALET D' COEUR
899
06
0 74808 01823 9
paizo publishing™

DRAGON® MAGAZINE

Group Publisher: **Johnny L. Wilson**
Editor-in-Chief: **Jesse Decker**
Art Director: **Lisa Chido**
Senior Editor: **Matthew Sernett**
Associate Editor: **Stacie Magelssen**
Editorial Assistance: **Jennifer Clarke-Wilkes**
Circulation Director: **Pierce Watters**
Director of Prod. & Manufacturing: **John Dunn**
Prepress Manager: **Matt Beals**
Senior Production Designer: **Theresa Cummins**
Ad Traffic Manager: **Dawnelle Miesner**

CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS

Kalman Andrasofszky, Chris Appel, Jason Engle, Phil Foglio, Jeremy Jarvis, Jeff Laubenstein, Todd Lockwood, Mike May, Dave McClellan, Tony Moseley, Derek Thompson, David Wahlstrom, Aaron Williams

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

Eric Cagle, Christopher Campbell, Andy Collins, Monte Cook, Thomas Harlan, Clifford Horowitz, Rob Kuntz, Mike Mearls, E. W. Morton, Ed Stark, Penny Williams, Skip Williams

PAIZO PUBLISHING, LLC
3245 146th Place SE, Suite 110
Bellevue, WA 98007

Chief Executive Officer
Lisa Stevens
President
Johnny L. Wilson
Director of Marketing and Operations
Mary Franklin
Technical Director
Vic Wertz
Corporate Administrator
Wailam Wilson

Dragon (USPS 318-790) is published monthly by Paizo Publishing, LLC, 3245 146th Place SE, Suite 110, Bellevue, WA 98007, United States of America. (ISSN# 1062-2101) Periodicals Postage Paid at Bellevue, WA, and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO *Dragon*, P.O. Box 469107, Escondido, CA 92046.
©2002 Wizards of the Coast, Inc.

No part of this magazine may be reproduced (except for review purposes) without the prior written consent of the publisher. Material published herein does not necessarily reflect the opinions of Paizo Publishing, LLC, its employees, or its editorial staff, who are not liable for opinions expressed herein. Most product names are trademarks owned by the companies that publish those products. Use of the name of any product without mention of trademark status should not be construed as a challenge to such status. Trademarks related to the Dungeons & Dragons brand, including *Dragon*, *Dungeon*, and D&D are trademarks of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. and are used under license from Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a division of Hasbro, Inc.

BACK ISSUES: www.paizo.com or call 425-289-1140
SUBSCRIPTIONS/CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Contact Publishers Creative Systems at **dragon@pcspublink.com** or call 1-760-291-1532.
Although we accept subscriptions to prison addresses, delivery is subject to the discretion and/or whim of prison personnel. If you have not received a magazine or premium, please consult with your Mail Room authorities. This publisher is not responsible for non-delivery.

ADVERTISING: Contact *Dragon*'s Group Publisher, Johnny Wilson, at (425) 289-1344. All ads are subject to approval by Paizo Publishing, LLC, which reserves the right to reject any ad for any reason. Advertisers and/or agencies of advertisers agree not to hold Paizo Publishing, LLC liable for any loss or expense from alleged wrongdoing that may arise out of the publication of such advertisements.

Northeastern Advertising Representatives: Sig or Scott Buchmayr, Buchmayr Associates, 137 Rowayton Avenue, Rowayton, CT 06853, (203) 855-8834.

DISTRIBUTION: National and international distribution is provided by Curtis Circulation Company, 730 River Road, New Milford, NJ 07646. Tel: (201) 634-7400. Fax: (201) 634-7499.

Open Game Content: Unless otherwise noted, this Paizo Publishing, LLC product contains no Open Game Content. No portion of this work may be reproduced in any form without permission. To learn more about the Open Gaming License and the d20 System License, please visit **www.wizards.com/d20**.

Printed in the U.S.A.

GAME ROOM

8 Wyrm's Turn
The rootbeer twenty—out of the freezer like a frozen ninja.

10 Scale Mail
Living Greyhawk, the OGL, and if you're going to jump, you better do it right.

16 Up On a Soapbox
Player vs. player in the early days

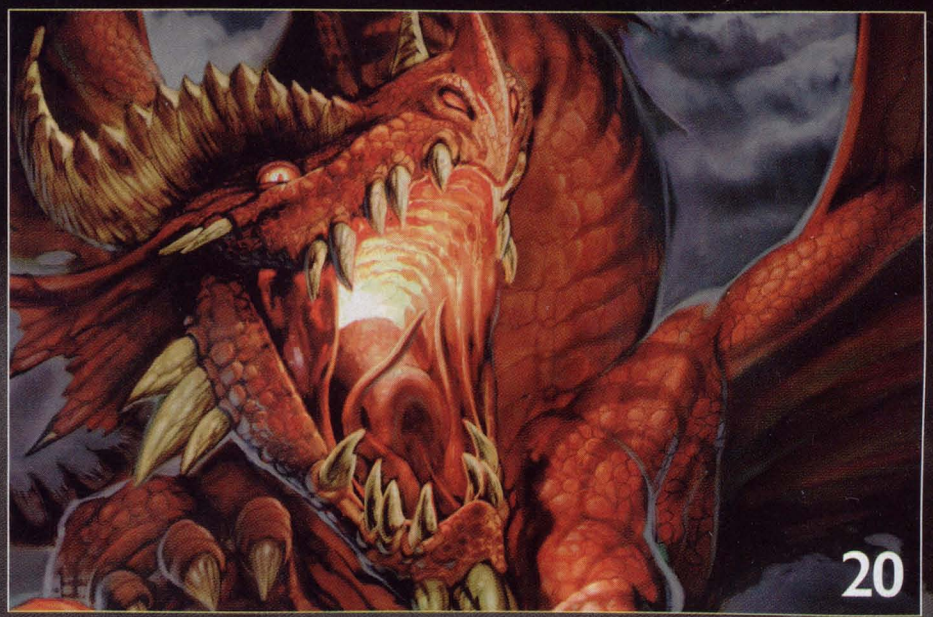
19 House Rules
Dwarves say the nicest things.

FEATURES

20 Dragon Magic
Master the ancient secrets of dragon magic, and add a new dimension to your game's spells.

28 Heavy Gear
Smart, strong, and gifted spell-casters—it's a good thing that dragon's don't use equipment. . .

36 Dweomered Dragon Scales
Powerful magic items built from the scales of dragons



ON THE COVER

Mike May's claw-in-your-face red dragon is his first painting to appear on the cover of *Dragon*. Wow. Good stuff Mike.

DRAGON® CONTENTS

Issue 308 · June 2003 Vol. XXVIII · Number 1

FEATURES

42 Demon Forests
The Ecology of the Ironmaw: the horrors of the Abyss invade the forests of your world.

48 Tactical Terrors
Players work hard to cover each other's weaknesses; now monsters do too.

52 Armed to the Tentacle
The illithid armies reveal twisted new weapons as they mass to fight against the incursion.

62 Psychic Boxing
The fighting styles of *Oriental Adventures* meet the mental prowess of the *Psionics Handbook*.

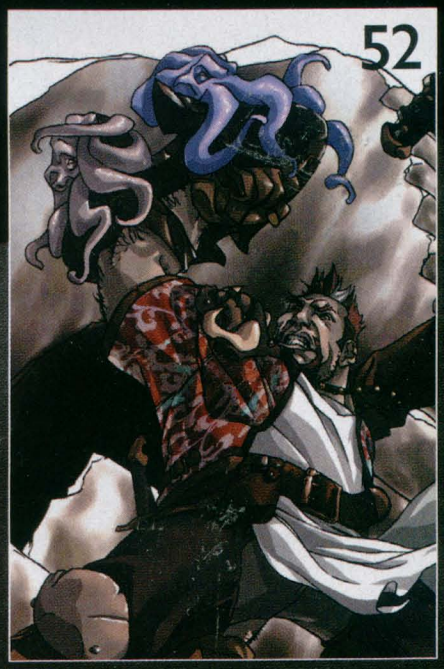
68 Arcane Weather
Change the world—unleash the power of magical storms.

78 Dork Tower

80 Theodora's Ladder
New fiction from Crusader Earth by *Dragon* regular Thomas Harlan

90 Revision Update
The classes change in D&D 3.5. Get the inside scoop on fighters, barbarians, and rangers.

94 Silicon Sorcery
Two epic prestige classes from Morrowind: one serves the gods, the other would destroy them.



WIZARDS' WORKSHOP

100 Dungeoncraft
Dungeoncraft's new look at world building turns to the strangest places of all: dungeons.

104 The Play's the Thing
It's not about how well you roll, it's about who the DM likes best. Tips for winning over your DM

108 Sage Advice
More questions on weapons, feats, items, and spells

112 Nodwick

113 Advertiser Index

114 What's New

DRAGONDEX

There's an online index of *Dragon Magazine*, and it's as cool a resource as we've seen. If you need a quick way to look up where or when an article appeared, just head to **www.aeolia.net/dragondex** and go to it.

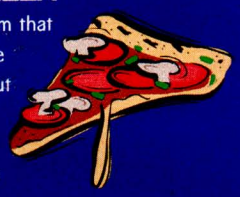
DUNGEON #100

Hey, *Dragon's* best friend in the gaming business is about to turn 100. One hundred issues that is. Seems like you can't pick up a copy of *Dungeon* these days without getting an issue of *Polyhedron* along with it—a great deal all around. For a more detailed preview of issue #100, take a look at page 14.

SURVEY SAYS!

We've had a great response to our web-based survey on issue #306. Not only has it given us a much better insight into the things you like and dislike about the magazine, but we also get a chance to allude to *Family Feud,* the best game show ever. We're going to run smaller, more focused surveys on the website sporadically as the year progresses, so please continue to share your opinions and shape the magazine by checking **www.paizo.com** from time to time. Remember that you can always share your thoughts and opinions about the magazine (or heck, about anything really) by sending an email to **scailmail@paizo.com.**

MMM . . . PIZZA



So the data from that survey we were just talking about pretty clearly shows that *Dragon* readers (as a team) consume about 500,000 pizzas a year (or about 1 pizza every other gaming session). We're not sure what that means, but it sure seems like someone should set us up with a sponsorship deal. Everyone on staff here (OK, really just Jesse) thinks that it would be great if you could call Papa John's and say "I'd like the D&D special please . . . Yeah, go ahead and *Dragon*-size it."

WYRM'S **TURN**

FROM THE EDITOR
THE ROOT-BEER TWENTY

The "root-beer twenty" probably rolled a random spread of numbers just like any other d20, but that's not how I remember it. One day early in my high-school tenure, my friends and I were spending a Saturday afternoon the way we spent most Saturday afternoons: playing D&D. My friend Brett, one of those players who's doing well if he remembers to bring his character sheet, much less his own dice or a rulebook, had just got a new set of dice, and the twenty-sider (an ugly, muddy-brown thing inked with white) was rolling really well. We took a break for pizza, and when we got back to the game, Brett couldn't find his die. After searching and searching, we decided to play, but the die hadn't been found, and Brett started rolling like crap.

Just before the final fight of the night, one of our other friends pulled a previously opened bag of mini-Reese's Peanut Butter Cups out of the freezer and found the lost d20. We sat back down to play, and Brett rolled 20 after 20, with a few 18s and 19s thrown into the mix. Even though Brett took out most of the monsters by himself, the root-beer twenty couldn't do anything for his Armor Class, and soon enough, half of the party was at negative hit points, and my character was the last one to have an action before our foes got a chance to act in what would likely be the round that finished us off.

And then, as I'm a little embarrassed to admit, Brett and I had the following exchange.

"Dude," I said, falling victim to '80's jargon, "let me use the root-beer twenty. We're dead if I don't kill that wizard."

"No way," said Brett, in deadly earnest. "You'll ruin it."

And so on, until Brett yielded and let me use his die. Truth be told, I actually thought that I would ruin it, but I didn't see any other way to save the party. I rolled a 20 though, and killed the opposing wizard with a critical hit.

For the next year or so, we'd chuck the root-beer twenty in the freezer just before an important roll, and it never failed to roll the number needed. Secretly scared of the fact that dice are random, we were careful never to roll the root-beer twenty unless absolutely necessary (which usually meant that Brett's character or my character would die if the roll wasn't successful), and on the times when it rolled poorly, we blamed ourselves, because we had obviously rushed the process and not left it in the freezer long enough between rolls.

The root-beer twenty incident is surely the weirdest dice-related experience I've ever had, but I'm still a little funny about dice. It's nothing of course, to warm up a set of dice before playing by rolling a few and determining the dice that you'll use for a session by which one rolls the highest during this warm up. It's also not unknown around the Paizo offices, for example, to get a new set of dice for a specific character—little dice for a Small character, shiny dice for a bard—you know the drill. The folks here at the office are big fans of convention dice too—that is, purposefully "forgetting" to pack dice for a convention so that you have to buy a new set on the first day of the con. Some folks here have even been known to remember a convention by the dice they got and how well they rolled.

We've given away all the 5-sided dice, but I'll send the person with the strangest dice-related story that we think is true a handful of dice scrounged from around the office. Send your tales to **scalemail@paizo.com.** Be warned though, we'll publish the funny ones in Scale Mail.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

To inquire about subscriptions, email **dragon@pcspublink.com** or call 1 (760) 291-1532. To contact *Dragon* about editorial concerns, email **scalemail@paizo.com.** Letters reproduced in the magazine may be edited for clarity and length. All letters must include your full name and home city. Due to time constraints and the volume of letters received, individual responses are not always possible.

WAR

First 3.5 Issue
This issue is the first issue of *Dragon* that will be all 3.5. Get ahead of the game by checking out the new version of D&D.

A History of War
by Dean Poisso
A look at the evolution of weapons and tactics with an eye toward the D&D rules, with plenty of ideas for your campaign or your character.

The Art of D&D
by Dean Poisso
If you would conquer, you must know your enemy better than he knows himself. Applying the principles of Sun Tzu's classic *The Art of War* to D&D combats.

Beasts of War
by Andy Collins
Living engines of destruction, these fearsome creatures work with armies, crushing those who oppose them.

War Spells
by Sean Reynolds
Devastating spells that can clear an entire battlefield, these spells of war were designed with large battles in mind.

PLUS!
"The Ecology of the Hobgoblin," "15 Ways to Speed Up Combat," a how-to guide to creating martial arts styles, and other great content.

CAMPAIGN COMPONENTS: INCURSION
by James Wyatt
You've defeated dungeons. You've slain dragons. You've become a hero. The githyanki don't care; they're going to kill you anyway. The githyanki incursion begins next month. For more information on this three-magazine event, check out page 6.

SCALE MAIL

READERS TALK BACK
EPIC, JUMPING, AND THE OGL

Epic Absence
In issue #297 you published epic-level spells and prestige classes, which I thought was fantastic, and even better, you said you would bring out more. But since then, five months ago, I have not heard a hint of it and keep wishing every month that it will be in the issue. Please tell me why you have not brought out more of these brilliant spells and classes. I still think your magazine is great, and keep it up.

Adam Hughes
Cheltenham, England

Books like the Epic Level Handbook *and the* Psionics Handbook *are some of my favorite products, because they provide rules that expand the game into entirely new areas. We still plan to support both of those books and other supplements like them, but we're limited in part by how often we get article proposals concerning them, and we've had few related to those books in recent months. This month, however, we've got an article related to each of those two supplements ("Silicon Sorcery" features two epic prestige classes and "Psychic Boxing" blends the* Psionics Handbook *and* Oriental Adventures*).*

Jesse Decker
Editor-in-Chief

You Say Jump
In issue #306, JD Wiker has an intriguing look at inserting action movie stunts into D&D. It is generally a good article, but the example of Lidda swinging on a rope reminds me of an irritating point in the rules. The rule that you can't move faster than you can double move while possibly making sense from a play balance approach, becomes ludicrous from anything resembling a real-world look at how objects move.

The first problem is that Lidda would not, as per the example, swing on a line as quickly as say, an elf character. Yet she would swing just as far. If you use an ideal pendulum to model the problem, you find the speed of the swing is dependent not on the weight of the character, a rationale which some might attempt, but solely on the length of the line. Remember the old saw about two objects of different weights falling at the same speeds. Worse, an attempted explanation using her weight would yield an in-game contradiction when a dwarf, heavier than an elf, would travel the same speed as the little halfling.

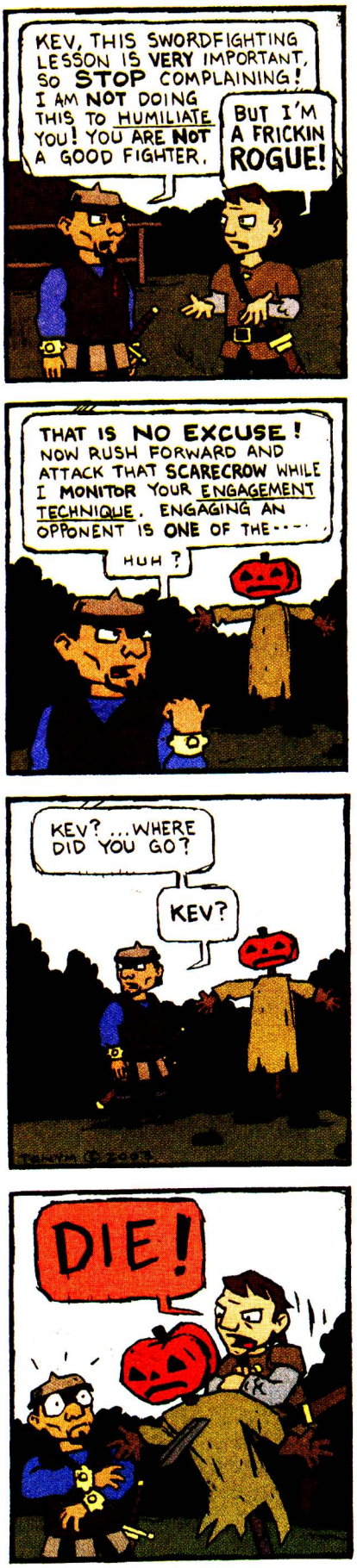
Naturally you could claim that the difference is how hard the different characters could thrust themselves forward to impart initial momentum to the swing, but then how do you explain the goblin character with a total Jump modifier of -1 making a faster swing than a dwarf with a +15 total Jump modifier? It seems clear the dwarf can jump harder, ergo swing faster, yet the present rules would argue otherwise.

This is similar to my objection to the current rules for jumping. A character with a 30-foot move and +50 Jump modifier, including wearing a *ring of jumping*, has a maximum vertical leap of 17 feet which means a maximum time in the air of just over 2 seconds. However that same character making a horizontal leap of 65 feet would be in the air for more than a full round. Since the horizontal leap has less upward initial velocity than the vertical leap, the maximum time in the air must be less than for the vertical leap, so how can a character be in the air for over 6 seconds? A truly ludicrous modification is the character who tries to throw a weapon in mid flight and thus can only make a single move, keeping in the air even longer.

The jumping rules could be modified by the simple observation that unless you have a low gravity, then a leap will not take over a turn unless the vertical distance is over 100 feet. The time in the air is low enough for a 100-foot vertical leap that even with 2 seconds lost to an initial run, a jumping character would land by the end of the round.

Charles Stucker
Webster, TX

To inquire about subscriptions, email **dragon@pcspublink.com** or call 1 (760) 291-1532. To contact *Dragon* about editorial concerns, email **scalemail@paizo.com**. Letters reproduced in the magazine may be edited for clarity and length. All letters must include your full name and home city. Due to time constraints and the volume of letters received, individual responses are not always possible.


ZOGONIA
KEV, THIS SWORDFIGHTING LESSON IS VERY IMPORTANT, SO STOP COMPLAINING! I AM NOT DOING THIS TO HUMILIATE YOU! YOU ARE NOT A GOOD FIGHTER.
BUT I'M A FRICKIN ROGUE!
THAT IS NO EXCUSE! NOW RUSH FORWARD AND ATTACK THAT SCARECROW WHILE I MONITOR YOUR ENGAGEMENT TECHNIQUE. ENGAGING AN OPPONENT IS ONE OF THE----
HUH?
KEV? ...WHERE DID YOU GO?
KEV?
DIE!
BY TONY MOSELEY

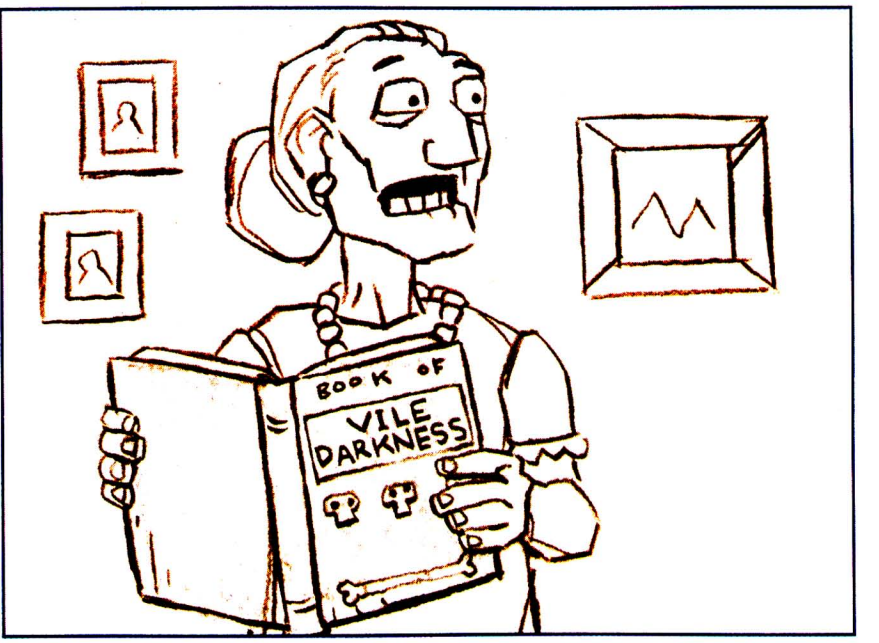
That sounds like a good observation . . . until you realize that characters with high Jump bonuses would jump everywhere because it would be faster than walking. It's sometimes necessary to give reality short shrift to make game play easier and to work within the boundaries of the rules, and of all the rules sets in D&D, the rules for movement are perhaps the most implausible. Consider, for instance, that D&D represents reality as though momentum simply does not exist. A horse can run full-tilt and stop on a dime. It can even stop mid-run when a creature readies an action and jumps out in front of it. This disconnect from physics isn't an error. It's necessary to simplify such things so that people can play the game without using calculus. The rules for swinging on a rope became complicated enough just by making them work with the rules of D&D; attempting to stringently make them represent the rules of physics would have broken my brain.

Matthew Sernett
Senior Editor

OGL Schmo-GL

Am I just not getting it? What is the big deal about Open Gaming License material to people who are not involved in the gaming industry? I was reading the letter by Jason Smith that was published in *Dragon* #306 and he made the statement "I think all the content in *Dragon* should be open, and the idea that open gaming content would destroy *Dragon* is ludicrous." I'm not attacking Mr. Smith, but to a non-industry person, isn't everything "open?" I thought the idea of the OGL was to allow other companies the right to publish D20 and D&D material without threatening Wizards of the Coast's trademarks. As a Dungeon Master who isn't involved in the gaming industry, everything is "open" to me. I will use rules or ideas from official D&D material, OGL material, other game settings, movies, books, television, miniatures, and really anything else that I think will make a good story or adventure. I don't try to claim any ownership or even originality when I do this. If the idea works, and my players and I have fun, that is what matters. I don't disagree with the OGL, in fact I support it. Some really good products have been published or spun off from publications due to the OGL that might not have seen the light of day without it. This being said, what is

CAPTION CONTEST



What's so funny? Why, you are! So send your caption for this cartoon to **Caption/Dragon Magazine, 3245 146th PL SE Suite 110, Bellevue, WA 98007** by August 1st, and be sure to write "issue #308" somewhere on your entry. Your caption will undergo rigorous testing by the editors, and if it passes, it just might be printed in an upcoming issue. There's no need to cut up your magazine. If you want to include the drawing, send in a photocopy.

To inquire about subscriptions, email **dragon@pcspublink.com** or call 1 (760) 291-1532. To contact *Dragon* about editorial concerns, email **scalemail@paizo.com**. Letters reproduced in the magazine may be edited for clarity and length. All letters must include your full name and home city. Due to time constraints and the volume of letters received, individual responses are not always possible.

DUNGEON #100

The 100th issue of *Dungeon Magazine* is here. Launched as the consummate D&D adventure magazine in 1986, *Dungeon* has become the ultimate DMs supplement.

"The Lich Queen's Beloved"
By Christopher Perkins
The massive crossover event finally arrives. Written by *Dungeon's* most prolific author, "The Lich Queen's Beloved" anchors this landmark issue. See pages 6-7 of this issue for more details.

Old Embers Never Die
By Andy Collins
One of *Dungeon's* most memorable villains returns. The cover subject of issue #1, Flame, returns to his lair in the Western Mountains, hungry for blood and treasure. A D&D Adventure for four 12th-level PCs.

Woe to Mistledale
By Skip Williams
This sequel to issue #87's "Raiders of Galath's Roost" takes the PCs to the Dales region of the Forgotten Realms. Some force has been disrupting trade along the Moonsea Ride. A D&D Forgotten Realms adventure for four 8th-level PCs.

Plus! "Critical Threats" by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Rich Baker, and Peter Adkison, and much more!

POLYHEDRON #159

Knights of the Lich Queen
An Incursion Mini-Game
The githyanki lich queen has ordered her soldiers to take a Material world. If you serve her with dedication and honor, your star will rise in her glorious eyes, and your name will go down in githyanki legends for eternity. The final war between man and once-man has begun. Assume your role and bring glory to your undead mistress.

the big deal with OGL material in *Dragon?*

William Wright
Address Withheld

You're right, whether or not the material in Dragon is designated open under the d20 license doesn't affect the average gamer directly. It only affects gamers when two companies publish a competing system—for example, if Dragon publishes underwater combat rules and another company wants to publish an adventure featuring underwater travel and combat, they're forced to produce a new set of rules.

Most DMs in this situation, you included I bet, would simply pick the system that they liked best and start playing. Although this might not slow down a game run by an experienced DM, it's simpler and better for the game if the two products present the same rules. That's why we've chosen the balanced approach that we're taking—we'll make articles OGL when we present a new rules system, but most of our established game elements (feats and spells, for example) will remain closed content unless Wizards chooses to include them in a future System Reference Document update (that's the SRD, the document that provides the basis for d20 reference).

Jesse Decker

No Foolin'

I have read *Dragon Magazine* since issue #18 when my brother brought a copy home and said, "I think this relates to that D&D game that you are always so engrossed in." Every year that I can recall, the April issue of *Dragon Magazine* has always held the same mystique as that swim-fashion issue that some sport magazine publishes each year.

April = D&D laughs.

Period.

I opened my latest copy, and I see no extra jokes, no funny stuff, and no fooling around. Has *Dragon* lost its sense of humor? Has it decided to "grow up?" If so, that is too bad.

Just mark me down as someone that *seriously* misses his *foolishness.*

John "PenderGrass" Zarate-Khus
Santa Barbara, CA

You didn't think the 5 extra pages of comics were funny? I laughed out loud (several times) when I read "Zoogonia." The frog was impaled on a nail!

Well . . . we did receive a proposal for an article of songs with their lyrics replaced with D&D references, but none of us knew the tunes to the latest hit songs by Britney Spears or NSYNC.

Matthew Sernett

Who? What? Where? When? How?

I am interested in how you become part of Living Greyhawk. I am fairly new to D&D, so these types of things elude me. Is it played over the Internet? Can I play a D&D character along with others from around the world? Who is the DM? How can you become a DM? I have a game crew of about eight or ten players, and because we are all fairly new to the game, pre-made adventures suit us just fine. Can you help me out on sending me any info you have on Living Greyhawk?

Jason Webb
Salt Lake City, UT

*Everything you need to get started playing in the Living Greyhawk campaign can be found at **www.rpga.com**. You'll need to join the RPGA Network, the largest group of roleplaying gamers in the world. Happily, membership is now free. You can join online or by attending an RPGA event in your area. Once you've joined, you'll need to create a character using the official campaign character creation rules, also found at **www.rpga.com**.*

Most Living Greyhawk games take place face-to-face. Chances are the RPGA group in your area already has a number of talented Dungeon Masters who will take you through your first few adventures. After you've played for a while, you might decide to start running games yourself. Living Greyhawk is a great deal of fun. Check it out and let us know how it goes!

Erik Mona
***Editor,* Living Greyhawk Journal**

You can get more Living Greyhawk information and updates from Dungeon/Polyhedron, the new home of the Living Greyhawk Journal.

By the way, I'm now going to call the people I play with my game crew—way cooler than "my gaming group." Thanks!

Matthew Sernett

To inquire about subscriptions, email **dragon@pcspublink.com** or call 1 (760) 291-1532. To contact *Dragon* about editorial concerns, email **scalemail@paizo.com**. Letters reproduced in the magazine may be edited for clarity and length. All letters must include your full name and home city. Due to time constraints and the volume of letters received, individual responses are not always possible.

THE BORED PC
ANTICS FROM THE EARLY DAYS

By Rob Kuntz

KNOWLEDGE CHECK
What did Gary Gygax do before he created D&D and TSR?
Answer on page 18.

The GREYHAWK players were a diverse lot, but one of the most imaginative was my brother, Terry Kuntz, who played no less than three PCs during his stint at adventuring, including his third and most notorious character, the Monk with No Name.

Having grown bored with his surroundings and current adventures, the Monk took to wandering the countryside, looking here and there for intrigue. During his wanderings, he happened upon another PC's lands and holdings, those of Ayelerach the fighter, played by Mark Ratner. Mark had sculpted Ayelerach's lands and riches with such care that the lands were producing bounty at a goodly pace, something that the Monk, upon seeing them, took note of and formulated a bold plan. He would extort the Baron of these rich lands!

His demands to the Baron were carried by squirrels that the Monk had befriended: tiny notes telling of his plans to wreck Ayelerach's lands if the tidy sum of 25,000 gp in gems was not paid to him forthwith! Ayelerach openly laughed at these demands but secretly convened a meeting of his captains to devise a plan to find and kill the Monk. All such meetings, of which there were many, were spied upon by the various animals now employed by the Monk.

So started the destruction the Monk had intended. Fields were sown with salt; tax collectors were waylaid and their monies stolen; livestock was dispersed into the night; merchants were stopped and robbed; and buildings were burned. Yet the Monk killed no one, for he fancied himself a thief and not an assassin.

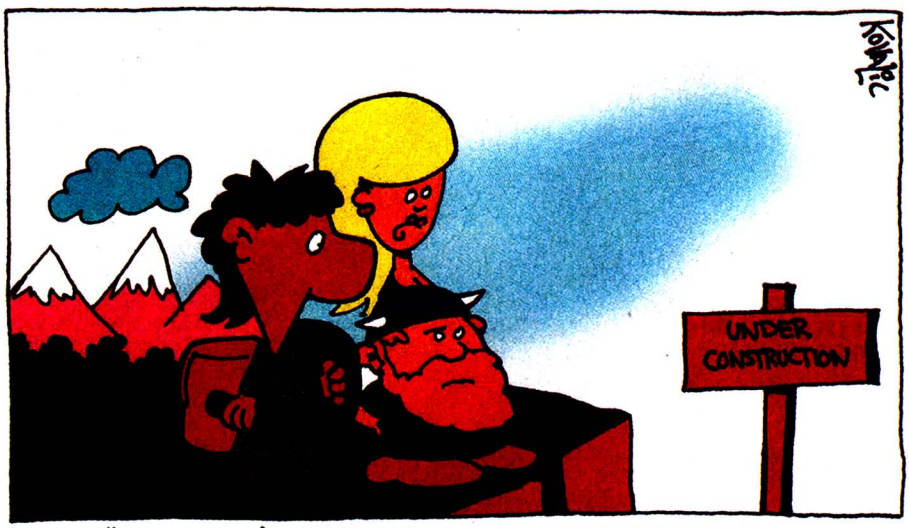
Ayelerach attempted to counter these raids, but in each case he was too late to do much besides witness the destruction the Monk had wrought. After many days of this activity, Ayelerach formulated a sweeping plan; and he had by that time deduced that he was indeed being spied upon. The plan called for large amounts of manpower organized in a sweep. For this he hired extra mercenaries, armed some local peasants, and emptied his stronghold of his garrison.

The sweep was successful in flushing the Monk, and since the line of men provided no opportunity for the Monk to flank them, he was driven to a nearby river. Ayelerach was overjoyed as the trap closed upon the Monk, whom he could now see. The Monk deliberated for a space and then jumped into the torrent. There, he went into a catatonic state and merely drifted downriver and eventually out of sight. Ayelerach was defeated and livid. He had spared no expense over the past days in attempting to eliminate his antagonist. But in despair, he now weighed his expenses to date against the extortion amount the Monk demanded.

That night Ayelerach came forth onto his balcony and shouted into the darkness, where he knew lurked the monk with his animal confederates. In sum, he would meet the villain's demands. That started a series of squirrel-express messages wherein the Monk indicated the time and place of their meeting. The gems were to be deposited in a leather pouch and placed, in full daylight, in the middle of a field between two wooded areas. If there was any sign of a trap, indicated the Monk, then he would continue his rampages of the Baron's lands to exact the proper punishment.

The appointed time came, and Ayelerach deposited the gems and quickly retreated to the woods where his cleric and magic-user awaited him, and they quickly cast several helpful spells on the angry fighter. But as Ayerlerach waited, a hawk appeared from above and dove down to grab the pouch. It then flew to the other woods where the gleeful Monk received it. Ayelerach cursed as he rushed forth, but the Monk was already fleeing the Baron's lands.

The Monk, ever bored, soon attempted the same thing with an evil high priest, but he was forced to flee before that NPC's undead, which relentlessly sought him far and wide. The priest took such offense to this outrage that he assigned a vampire to hunt the Monk, ensuring that the Monk did not profit from such perfidy.



"EITHER WE'VE REACHED THE LEGENDARY EDGE OF THE EARTH, OR OUR WORLD-BUILDING GM RAN OUT OF TIME BEFORE THE GAME AGAIN."

To inquire about subscriptions, email dragon@pcspublink.com or call 1 (760) 291-1532. To contact *DRAGON* about editorial concerns, email scalemail@paizo.com. Letters reproduced in the magazine may be edited for clarity and length. All letters must include your full name and home city. Due to time constraints and the volume of letters received, individual responses are not always possible.

PERSONABLE DWARVES
VARIANT CAMPAIGN FLAVOR

by Andy Collins

A: KNOWLEDGE CHECK He was an insurance salesman. In 1973 he taught himself shoe repair to suppliment his income from D&D.

House rules can take a variety of forms, from minor tweaks to sweeping changes. The single most important thing to remember when crafting a house rule is that you and your friends are playing the game to have fun. In the end, any house rule that makes the game more fun for your group is probably a good one. But remember that sometimes even a rule that everyone seems to enjoy might be causing more harm than good. It's a good idea to re-evaluate your house rules from time to time, particularly as players and characters change. A house rule that works for one group of players might not work for another, and a variant that seems fine with one party of adventurers might be wholly unsuitable for the next.

When you're creating a new house rule, take some time to talk it over with the rest of your gaming group, and use the techniques described in the last few installments of this column to evaluate it. Even if it passes a these tests, make sure to keep an open mind about checking again to make sure you didn't underestimate (or overestimate) the rule's impact on the game.

HOUSE RULE: Personable Dwarves

One simple way to add flavor to your game is by tweaking the character races presented in Chapter 2 of the *Player's Handbook*. Rather than adding completely new PC races—a process that often forces you to reevaluate the various races' roles in your campaign and forces the players to learn new archetypes and character concepts—introduce slight changes to the existing race that customizes them for your game.

The archetype of the "tough but gruff" dwarf is ingrained in the D&D game, going back many years. Unfortunately, this prevents dwarves from taking advantage of the lack of class/race restrictions in what seem like obvious ways. With their tendency toward lawful good, dwarves would appear to be natural paladins, yet the Charisma penalty dramatically reduces the typical dwarf's power in this role. To a smaller extent, it reduces the efficacy of the dwarven cleric, and it of course discourages dwarven bards or sorcerers.

For a race of dwarves more inclined toward personal interaction—and thus more inclined toward paladinhood and sorcery—consider this house rule: Instead of the dwarf's traditional -2 penalty to Charisma, give the dwarves of your campaign (or perhaps just a subgroup of them) an equivalent -2 penalty to Dexterity. It's easy to picture dwarves as being less than agile, so this house rule doesn't require much of an intuitive leap on your players' parts. Of course, a penalty to Dexterity is harsher than a penalty to Charisma, so you might consider offsetting this by increasing the dwarf's Constitution modifier to +4. While this seems like a big adjustment, a good Constitution doesn't make a character nearly as potent as a high Strength or Dexterity. Sure, these dwarves will have a lot of hit points, but the AC penalty from their low Dexterity makes up for it. It also encourages the dwarves to wear the heaviest armor they can find, which fits in well with the archetype of the "dwarven tank" fighter.

Of course, the Dexterity penalty means that dwarven rogues will tend to rely on their wits (or their toughness) more than their agility. Consider counteracting this with a +2 racial bonus to Open Lock checks (dwarves may not be agile, but they know how to fix—and thus how to break—intricate objects). That puts them on a par with the average halfling burglar, but less capable of hiding, sneaking, and tumbling—all decidedly non-dwarven activities.

d20stuff.com
Your #1 stop for open source content on the web!
Feats • Magic Items • Gods • Riddles
NPCs • Spells • Campaign Settings
Skills • Equipment • Prestige Classes
Domains • Classes • Phobias • Articles
Races • Fighting Styles • Adventures
Come get your d20 stuff!

To inquire about subscriptions, email dragon@pcspublink.com or call 1 (760) 291-1532. In Europe, email jen.blagg@tnsofres.com To contact *Dragon* about editorial concerns, email scalemail@paizopublishing.com. Letters reproduced in the magazine may be edited for clarity and length. All letters must include your full name and home city. Due to time constraints and the volume of letters received, individual responses are not always possible.

DRAGON MAGIC

D20 OPEN GAME CONTENT
SEE PAGE 26 FOR DETAILS

by Monte Cook
illustrated by Mike May

Somewhere on a lonely hill, far from the civilized lands, merchant roads, and even the pen and ink of the greatest mapmakers, stands Castle Arthonath. Within this keep's ancient walls, dragons once lived. Its doorways and corridors are not meant for the feet of men or elves—they are massive, as is everything within Castle Arthonath. Further, some of the great chambers in the heart of the innermost keep require that a creature have wings to reach every point of import.

The magic that built and protects Castle Arthonath is a magic unique to dragonkind. This magic, known simply as dragon magic, proves difficult—but not impossible—for nondragons to use. Dragon magic is a power unknown to most people, even well-schooled wizards. It is ancient and relies on elder powers and pacts humans and their ilk hardly know exist. It is, in fact, the first magic, the primal magic. Despite its primal nature, dragon magic is extremely sophisticated. It is not raw, uncontrolled power, but the carefully crafted and lovingly honed spell mastery that only a race with centuries to devote to a single incantation could produce.

Some dispute that spellcasting originated from dragonkind. Many human sorcerers and elven wizards take great umbrage at the very idea. It is indisputable, however, that dragons are far older than humans and discovered magic long before humanity existed.

Because they draw upon the most primal essences of magic, dragon magic spells sometimes seem more powerful than normal spells. Their verbal components usually consist of mighty roars, and their somatic components are sweeping and grand.

Today, one can only find the secret of dragon magic in an ancient book or scroll penned by one of the original humans who learned the lore from the dragons themselves (or at least claimed to). Very rarely, a benevolent dragon will teach a non-dragon how to use dragon magic spells out of the kindness of his heart, or an evil dragon will teach a spellcasting lackey so that he can better serve her.

The concept of dragon magic, as presented here, as well as the Dragon Magic feat, originally appeared in the *Book of Eldritch Might III* by Malhavoc Press.

USING DRAGON MAGIC

You must have the following feat to access these secrets. The Dragon Magic feat is a component of all the spells in the rest of this article (and all dragon magic spells). Dragon magic spells share many characteristics. They are ever so slightly more powerful than other spells of equivalent level, and they all require the Dragon Magic feat to cast.

Dragon Magic [General]

You learn to master powerful magic that normally only dragons use.

Prerequisites: Caster level 3rd+, Intelligence 13+, Charisma 15+, Speak Language (Draconic)

Benefit: You can learn spells with the Dragon Magic component, normally unavailable to nondragons. Nondragons with this feat are often called dragon mages.

Special: Dragons gain this feat for free.

DRAGON MAGIC SPELLS

Dragon magic spells only very rarely have material components. It is theorized that most material components were added to spells by non-dragon casters much later in the development of spellcasting. The dragons claim that this is because the other casters did not understand some of the fundamental principals of magic and thus improvised. Most dragon magic spells are slightly better than other spells of their level, but not so much that they are as good as spells of the next highest level.

Dragon magic spells often pertain to subjects that dragons are interested in—protecting a lair, enhancing their own abilities, dealing damage to foes (although since dragons are already capable of dealing great amounts of damage, dragon attack spells often do something beyond just simple damage, such as holding or slowing foes, or confusing or blinding them), and so on. They never duplicate something that a dragon can already do, such as flying, granting natural armor, detecting invisible creatures, and so on. They do, however, enhance such things, presuming that the caster already possesses the ability.

All of the spells below are dragon magic spells, accessible only to dragons or to those with the Dragon Magic feat. Presumably, there are more dragon magic spells in existence. This is only a sampling of the powerful and versatile magic of dragons.

Electrified Lair

Abjuration [Electricity]
Level: Wiz/Sor 4
Components: V, S, Dragon Magic
Casting Time: 1 minute
Range: 0 feet
Area: Two 10-ft. cubes/level
Duration: Permanent until 1 round/level after triggered
Saving Throw: No
Spell Resistance: Yes

The caster creates an area that is trapped with an electrified field. If anyone other than the caster or allies designated by the caster at the time of casting (up to 1 individual creature per caster level) enters the area, the ward is triggered and the spell lasts for 1 round per caster level after that. Each round after it is triggered, all creatures in the area who are not the caster or his designated allies suffer 2d6 points of electricity damage. Only one *electrified lair* spell can be in place in an area at one time. If the areas of two *electrified lair* spells would overlap, only the original spell is active in the overlapped area.

Freezing Cloud

Conjuration (Creation) [Cold]
Level: Sor/Wiz 7
Components: V, S, Dragon Magic
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Effect: Cloud spreads 30 ft. wide and 20 ft. high
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Reflex half (see text)
Spell Resistance: Yes (see text)

A bluish-white cloud of freezing vapors appears where the caster designates. The cloud obscures all sight, including darkvision, beyond 5 feet. A creature within 5 feet has one-half concealment (attacks suffer a 20% miss chance). Creatures farther away have total concealment (50% miss chance, and the attacker can't use sight to locate the target). In addition, the freezing mist deals 3d6 points of cold damage to everything within it each round (half damage on a successful Reflex save). Anyone failing the saving throw is also *slowed* for 1d4+2 rounds. Those remaining in the cloud must make a new saving throw each round.

The cloud moves away from the caster at a speed of 10 feet per round. Figure out the spell's new spread each round based on its new point of origin, 10 feet farther away from where the caster was when the spell was cast. By concentrating, the caster can make the cloud (actually its point of origin) move up to 60 feet each round in any direction she wishes. A creature must only make one saving throw against the *freezing cloud* each round; moving the could on and off a creature several times in a round has no added effect. Any portion of the cloud that would extend beyond the character's maximum range dissipates harmlessly, reducing the remainder's spread thereafter.

A moderate wind (11+ mph) disperses the cloud in 4 rounds; a strong wind (21+ mph) disperses the cloud in 1 round.

Summoning Pact

Conjuration (Calling)
Level: Clr 8, Wiz/Sor 9
Components: V, S, Dragon Magic
Casting Time: 1 full round
Range: Medium (100 feet + 10 feet/level)
Effect: 1 living creature
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

The caster must pre-designate a creature before casting this spell. To designate a creature, the caster must touch the creature and say its name. The creature must be willing and have fewer Hit Dice than the caster.

When cast, this spell conjures the designated creature, which appears where the caster chooses, at any spot within range. The creature must appear on a flat, stable surface that does not pose an immediate danger (such as atop a pit trap or a pool of lava). The conjured creature can act immediately upon appearing. It acts of its own free will, and regardless of its actions, it returns from where it was called from when the spell's duration ends. If it has gear on it at the time of conjuration, the spell calls it as well.

Familiarity of Place
Divination
Level: Clr 1, Wiz/Sor 1
Components: V, S, Dragon Magic
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: 0 feet
Area: 10 foot/level radius
Duration: 1 minute/level
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

The caster ties himself directly to where he currently stands. While in that area, he gains a +1 luck bonus to saving throws. Dragons and dragon mages are formidable in their own lairs.

Greater Familiarity of Place
Divination
Level: Clr 8, Wiz/Sor 8
Components: V, S, Dragon Magic
Duration: Permanent
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: Yes

As *familiarity of place*, except as noted above and the luck bonus to saving throws is +1 plus an additional +1 for every five caster levels. Further, if the caster is within the radius, he has a 3% chance per level to be able to know the location (distance and direction) and identity (name, race, and level) of each creature in the radius (rolling separately for each creature as soon as they enter the radius, rerolling only if the creature leaves the radius and returns), regardless of line of sight, visibility conditions, and so on—although spells that offer protection from divinations (such as *nondetection*) still apply. It is a standard action for the caster to attempt to sense the location and identity of others in the radius.

Identify with Flame
Divination
Level: Clr 4, Wiz/Sor 4
Components: V, S, Dragon Magic
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: 0 feet
Area: 50-foot-radius burst, centered on you
Targets: All creatures within range
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

When casting this spell, the caster designates one of the following:

- A specific alignment (chaotic good, neutral evil, lawful neutral, and so on)
- A specific creature type (aberration, undead, and so on)
- A specific creature subtype (humanoid [reptilian], [elf], [orc], and so on)
- A specific class (fighter, commoner, arcane archer, and so on)

Then, once cast, the spell places a harmless flickering flame above the head of all creatures in range that the designated condition applies to. For example, the caster can choose "rogue" as the designator, and then all creatures with rogue levels within 50 feet have flickering flames over their head. The flames give off the light of torches but no heat and last for 1 round.

This spell is useful for identifying disguised or polymorphed creatures, but spells that protect a creature from divinations (such as *nondetection*) block it.

Burden
Enchantment [Mind-affecting]
Level: Brd 3, Wiz/Sor 3
Components: V, S, Dragon Magic
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Medium (100 feet + 10 feet/level)
Target: One creature/level no two of which can be more than 30 feet apart
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

The target suddenly feels burdened, as if she is carrying much more than she really is. The additional weight is 25 pounds per caster level. If this additional weight puts the target in the range of her medium or heavy load, she suffers maximum Dexterity, check penalties, and a reduction in speed as outlined in the *Player's Handbook*. If the additional weight puts the target over twice her maximum load, she cannot move more than 5 feet per round (as a full-round action) and loses all Dexterity bonuses to AC. If the additional weight puts her load at more than five times her maximum load, she cannot move and is helpless. Of course, the target can drop gear or even armor to reduce her load. Dragons sometimes use this spell not to stop thieves running out of their lair but to get them to drop valuables—both those they were stealing and those they brought in with them. Dragons find forcing thieves in their lair to leave with less than they came with the height of ironic humor.

Everlasting Terror
Enchantment (Compulsion) [Fear, Mind-Affecting]
Level: Wiz/Sor 5
Components: V, S, Dragon Magic
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Long (400 ft. + 40 ft./level)
Target: 1 creature
Duration: Permanent (see text)
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

Dragons are fearsome creatures and know much about inflicting terror. This spell causes one creature already panicked by dragon fear to be permanently afraid of the dragon. Whenever the affected creature comes within range of the dragon, he suffers a -2 morale penalty on saving throws, and flees from the dragon for 1d6 rounds (or until he is out of range of the spell, whichever is longer). A panicked creature has a 50% chance to drop what it's holding, chooses its path randomly (as long as it is getting away from immediate danger), and flees any other dangers that confront it. If cornered, a panicked creature cowers.

Roaring Wall
Evocation [Sonic]
Level: Wiz/Sor 6
Components: V, S, Dragon Magic
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Medium (100 feet + 10 ft./level)
Effect: A plane with an area of no more than 50 square feet per level
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates (see below)
Spell Resistance: Yes

With a mighty roar, the caster brings into being a wall of sonic energy that emits a deafening rumble. Within 20 to 50 feet of the wall, all Listen checks suffer a -4 circumstance penalty due to the noise. Likewise, someone even farther away suffers the same penalty on Listen checks made to hear a noise within that area. Within 20 feet of the

wall, all creatures that can hear must succeed at a Fortitude saving throw each round or be permanently deafened. Even those that make their saving throw are effectively deafened while in the area—all Listen checks fail, and spells with a verbal component have a 20% chance to fail. Any noise made in this area cannot be heard over the din.

Within 10 feet, all the above effects take place, plus failure at the saving throw each round causes the creature to suffer 2d6 points of sonic damage. Permanently deafened creatures must continue to make Fortitude saves each round to avoid the sonic damage.

The wall itself has no hardness, but is quite solid. It has 10 hit points per caster level and is immune to sonic, cold, and fire damage. A *disintegrate* spell destroys it automatically. A *silence* spell with its area overlapping the area of sound around a *roaring wall* protects all those within its area. A *silence* spell with its area overlapping a portion of the wall puts a hole in the wall equal in size to the area of the *silence* spell. This effect does not damage the wall, it only suppresses it.

Cheat Death
Necromancy
Level: Wiz/Sor 7
Components: V, S, M, Dragon Magic
Casting Time: 1 hour
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: Permanent until triggered

The caster draws on ancient lore to allow himself one chance to possibly avoid death, even when it would otherwise be inevitable. The next time the caster is dying (has between 0 and -10 hp), there is a 5% chance per caster level that his soul is safeguarded in a magical receptacle on the Astral Plane. The caster's body remains and to all means of physical and magical examination, he appears dead. The soul remains in the receptacle for 1d100 days, minus the caster's level in days (minimum 1 day). When that time ends, the caster appears on the plane where he was dying, at that very spot, at 0 hit points, regardless of what condition his body was in after his soul was safeguarded. For example, if a spellcaster falls in battle and triggers this spell, and his foes burn his body, the body is reconstituted when the soul returns.

Material component: An opal worth at least 5,000 gp.

Burning Water
Transmutation [Acid]
Level: Drd 6, Wiz/Sor 5
Components: V, S, Dragon Magic
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Close (25 feet + 5 feet/2 levels)
Area: Two 10-ft. cubes of water/5 levels (S)
Duration: 1 minute/level
Saving Throw: Reflex half
Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell transforms a large amount of water into a burning, caustic acid, although the acid emits no fumes or smell to betray its nature and looks just like normal water. If cast upon an area of water that is part of a larger body of water, the water and acid do not mix. Thus, the spell can create an area of hidden danger in a lake or large pool. Anyone touching the water suffers 1d6 points of damage. Anyone immersed in it (including anyone swimming through the affected area) suffers 10d6 points of damage, although a successful Reflex save reduces the damage by half.

Deadly Spray
Transmutation
Level: Clr 3, Wiz/Sor 3
Components: V, S, Dragon Magic
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 1 minute/level

Once this spell is cast, any time the caster creates an effect that is a line (like a *lightning bolt* or certain breath weapons), he can spray it back and forth causing it to be a cone effect rather than a line. The choice between making the attack a line or cone is up to the caster and can vary from round to round.

Expel from Lair
Transmutation [Teleportation]
Level: Clr 4, Wiz/Sor 4
Components: V, S, Dragon Magic
Casting Time: 10 minutes
Range: 0 feet
Area: Two 10-ft. cubes/level
Duration: Permanent until triggered
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

Once this spell is cast, the caster gains a special ability while he is in the affected area. At any time, as a standard action, he can teleport any creature in the area out of the area. The teleported creature ends up at the last spot he was in that lies outside of the area. He cannot reenter the area for 1 minute/caster level. Once the teleportation is attempted, whether successful or not, the spell ends.

Fly Like an Arrow
Transmutation
Level: Wiz/Sor 4
Components: V, S, Dragon Magic
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 1 hour/level

This spell allows the caster to fly at great speed. If the caster can fly (either with wings or from a spell or item), he can move at 10 times his normal fly speed, but only if he travels in a straight line and traveled the full distance of his normal fly speed in a straight line in the previous round. For example, a caster using the *fly* spell casts *fly like an arrow.* He must move 90 feet in a straight line on one round. Then, on the next round and all subsequent rounds he can move with a speed of 900 in a straight line. The caster can take no actions other than moving while using this spell, including such things as flyby attacks. If the caster ever stops, turns, or uses an action, his speed immediately returns to normal and remains so until he moves at full speed in a straight line for a round.

Scales of Energy
Transmutation
Level: Wiz/Sor 3
Components: V, S, Dragon Magic
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 1 minute/level

The caster transforms his natural armor into a visible magical aura. If the caster is a dragon, his scales turn to a scintillating energy and float up and around the dragon's body, like thousands of tiny satellites. All of the caster's natural armor bonus to AC

becomes a deflection bonus to AC, and thus protects against touch attacks.

Shield Companion
Transmutation
Level: Wiz/Sor 1
Components: V, S, Dragon Magic
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Target: 1 shield
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

The caster can make one unattended shield and have it float magically around him, protecting him as if he was using it, but suffering none of the penalties usually suffered while using it, such as check penalties, maximum Dexterity, and spell failure chance.

If anyone attempts to snatch the shield away, the spell resists it as if the caster was indeed wearing the shield, so a normal disarm attempt is necessary.

Shifting Sanctum
Transmutation
Level: Clr 9, Wiz/Sor 9
Components: V, S, Dragon Magic
Casting Time: 12 hours
Range: 0 feet
Area: Up to 1 10-foot cube per level (S)
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

The caster transports himself and an area chosen by him (and objects in that area) to another location that he has physically visited. The destination must be somehow be befitting of the locale moved. Thus, if a dragon's lair is a system of caves built into a cliff side, he can shift the lair to another set of cliffs nearby, on another continent, or on another plane. The spell then creates the space needed for the shift (magically and instantly digging out new caves in the new cliff wall that conform to the original caves) and fills in the space left behind (the old caves at the original location are filled in with natural stone). The lair conforms as best as possible to the new site. Conforming might include shifting the layout, the size, and the entrance of a location slightly—this is all subject to DM adjudication.

If it fits within the area of the spell, a whole building could be transported to a new location. The caster could also move only a few rooms, making them into their own separate structure at the destination or attaching them onto an existing structure. They could even replace existing rooms in an existing structure.

Within reason, the existing contents and environment within the location moved travels with it. However, some environmental conditions must conform to the new locality. Moving a small keep underwater causes the keep to fill with water unless some other magic is at work (the place is watertight). Moving an area of the elemental plane of fire to an icy plain will cause the heat of the fiery area to melt the ice and snow in the new locale, but fairly quickly the temperature of the transplanted area will lower and become consistent with the environment around it.

The void left behind by the area taken by the spell remains stable for 1d4 rounds, but thereafter it remains stable or collapses as it normally would.

Small Enough
Transmutation
Level: Wiz/Sor 2
Components: V, S, Dragon Magic
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates (harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

The target can fit through any opening or passage up to 6 inches wide, regardless of the target's actual size. While passing through the opening or passage, the target shrinks down to become small enough to fit. While shrunk, the target can take only move-equivalent actions. As soon as he is once again in an area that can accommodate his size, he returns to normal, whether he wishes to or not. While his size is different, the caster gains appropriate AC modifications based on size, but nothing else about him changes (Strength, hit points, and so on).

If the duration ends and the target is within a space too small for him, he is ejected out of the space into the nearest space that will accommodate him. If such a space is not available, the target remains small but suffers 1 point of damage per round. His surroundings also suffer that damage (ignoring hardness), so if the target has more hit points than the surroundings, eventually he will destroy them and grow to fit the space. For example, if a Huge dragon uses this spell to move through a narrow hole in a stone wall but foes plug up either end of the hole to trap her inside, the dragon and the stone wall suffer 1 point of damage per round after the spell's duration ends. The dragon likely has more hit points than the wall and eventually smashes out of it, most likely very angry.

Unstoppable Energy
Transmutation
Level: Wiz/Sor 5
Components: V, S, Dragon Magic
Casting Time: 1 full round
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 10 minutes/level or until discharged

The next time the caster releases any kind of discharge of energy damage, whether it be a breath weapon, a *fireball* spell, or a *lightning bolt* from a wand, the energy ignores any protection offered by a *protection from elements, endure elements,* or *resist elements* spell. Innate resistance to the energy type is also ignored, but immunities are not.

Vorpal Claws
Transmutation
Level: Wiz/Sor 8
Components: V, S, Dragon Magic
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 1 round/2 levels
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates (Harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (Harmless)

One creature's claws become magically sharp and prone to beheading other creatures. Upon a successful critical, the claws sever the opponent's head if it has one. Some creatures (like many abominations and all oozes) have no head. Others (like golems and undead other than vampires) are not affected by the loss of their head. Most other creatures, however, die. D

OPEN GAME LICENSE VERSION 1.0A

The following text is the property of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. and is Copyright 2000 Wizards of the Coast, Inc ("Wizards"). All Rights Reserved.

1. Definitions: (a)"Contributors" means the copyright and/or trademark owners who have contributed Open Game Content; (b)"Derivative Material" means copyrighted material including derivative works and translations (including into other computer languages), potation, modification, correction, addition, extension, upgrade, improvement, compilation, abridgment or other form in which an existing work may be recast, transformed or adapted; (c) "Distribute" means to reproduce, license, rent, lease, sell, broadcast, publicly display, transmit or otherwise distribute; (d)"Open Game Content" means the game mechanic and includes the methods, procedures, processes and routines to the extent such content does not embody the Product Identity and is an enhancement over the prior art and any additional content clearly identified as Open Game Content by the Contributor, and means any work covered by this License, including translations and derivative works under copyright law, but specifically excludes Product Identity. (e) "Product Identity" means product and product line names, logos and identifying marks including trade dress; artifacts; creatures characters; stories, storylines, plots, thematic elements, dialogue, incidents, language, artwork, symbols, designs, depictions, likenesses, formats, poses, concepts, themes and graphic, photographic and other visual or audio representations; names and descriptions of characters, spells, enchantments, personalities, teams, personas, likenesses and special abilities; places, locations, environments, creatures, equipment, magical or supernatural abilities or effects, logos, symbols, or graphic designs; and any other trademark or registered trademark clearly identified as Product Identity by the owner of the Product Identity, and which specifically excludes the Open Game Content; (f) "Trademark" means the logos, names, mark, sign, motto, designs that are used by a Contributor to identify itself or its products or the associated products contributed to the Open Game License by the Contributor (g) "Use", "Used" or "Using" means to use, Distribute, copy, edit, format, modify, translate and otherwise create Derivative Material of Open Game Content. (h) "You" or "Your" means the licensee in terms of this agreement.

2. The License: This License applies to any Open Game Content that contains a notice indicating that the Open Game Content may only be Used under and in terms of this License. You must affix such a notice to any Open Game Content that you Use. No terms may be added to or subtracted from this License except as described by the License itself. No other terms or conditions may be applied to any Open Game Content distributed using this License.

3. Offer and Acceptance: By Using the Open Game Content You indicate Your acceptance of the terms of this License.

4. Grant and Consideration: In consideration for agreeing to use this License, the Contributors grant You a perpetual, worldwide, royalty-free, non-exclusive license with the exact terms of this License to Use, the Open Game Content.

5. Representation of Authority to Contribute: If You are contributing original material as Open Game Content, You represent that Your Contributions are Your original creation and/or You have sufficient rights to grant the rights conveyed by this License.

6. Notice of License Copyright: You must update the COPYRIGHT NOTICE portion of this License to include the exact text of the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any Open Game Content You are copying, modifying or distributing, and You must add the title, the copyright date, and the copyright holder's name to the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any original Open Game Content you Distribute.

7. Use of Product Identity: You agree not to Use any Product Identity, including as an indication as to compatibility, except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of each element of that Product Identity. You agree not to indicate compatibility or co-adaptability with any Trademark or Registered Trademark in conjunction with a work containing Open Game Content except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of such Trademark or Registered Trademark. The use of any Product Identity in Open Game Content does not constitute a challenge to the ownership of that Product Identity. The owner of any Product Identity used in Open Game Content shall retain all rights, title and interest in and to that Product Identity.

8. Identification: If you distribute Open Game Content You must clearly indicate which portions of the work that you are distributing are Open Game Content.

9. Updating the License: Wizards or its designated Agents may publish updated versions of this License. You may use any authorized version of this License to copy, modify and distribute any Open Game Content originally distributed under any version of this License.

10 Copy of this License: You MUST include a copy of this License with every copy of the Open Game Content You Distribute.

11. Use of Contributor Credits: You may not market or advertise the Open Game Content using the name of any Contributor unless You have written permission from the Contributor to do so.

12. Inability to Comply: If it is impossible for You to comply with any of the terms of this License with respect to some or all of the Open Game Content due to statute, judicial order, or governmental regulation then You may not Use any Open Game Material so affected.

13. Termination: This License will terminate automatically if You fail to comply with all terms herein and fail to cure such breach within 30 days of becoming aware of the breach. All sublicenses shall survive the termination of this License.

14. Reformation: If any provision of this License is held to be unenforceable, such provision shall be reformed only to the extent necessary to make it enforceable.

15. COPYRIGHT NOTICE
Open Game License v 1.0 Copyright 2000, Wizards of the Coast, Inc.
Book of Eldritch Might III Copyright 2002, Malhavoc Press.

Saddle
Barding

HEAVY GEAR

DRAGON MAGIC ITEMS AND EQUIPMENT

by Eric Cagle · illustrated by Chris Appel

Dragons. The very name conjures images of enormous monsters capable of ripping a man apart with a casual bite. Their physical attributes are awe-inspiring, with mouths full of razor-sharp teeth, claws ending in deadly talons, and powerful tails that can crush a wagon with a swat. Their breath weapons might melt steel, chill bone, cloud the mind, or produce a wide variety of unpleasant and powerful forms of destruction.

Despite this natural arsenal, dragons can and do make use of magic items, as well as mundane gear that would not look out of place in an adventurers' campsite. Some rare individuals even carry special weapons, fighting with steel before switching to their claws and breath. As creatures of magic, dragons are naturally drawn to items of power that augment their already impressive might. They covet anything of value, and because magic is the ultimate expression of wealth, dragons are particularly motivated to gather up and hoard as much as they can.

THE WELL-STOCKED DRAGON

Dragons are well known for their love of material wealth and insatiable need to hoard. Most are drawn to the glint of precious metals, gems, and works of art to decorate their lairs. However, as long-lived individuals with unique tastes, dragons sometimes collect the unusual and bizarre, spending their extended lifetimes in search of special items.

A dragon stocks its lair much as a humanoid creature would, with a ready source of water, comfortable bedding, and a stockpile of food. The type of dragon dictates the sort of provisions. For example, black dragons prefer a larder of corpses in a pool of fetid water, while silver dragons have subtle, rarified tastes—many have kitchens and pantries that rival a king's, complete with a dedicated staff of servants to prepare and cook for them. Unless food is abundant, or extremely rare, a dragon keeps stores stashed about its home. Adventurers who explore a dragon's lair might find several of these—a gruesome sight if the inhabitant is fond of humanoid flesh.

Dragons who *polymorph* often, especially silver, gold, and bronze dragons, stock their lairs with equipment typically found among humanoids. Libraries are common, along with armories, trophy rooms, food stores, and even a dining area. These dragons might have both huge chambers that can accommodate their natural form and human-sized rooms for entertaining guests and other purposes. Those who take magical experimentation more seriously probably also have an arcane laboratory—scaled to dragon size and filled with servant creatures, of course.

The actual hoard of a dragon serves multiple purposes: It is bedding, as well as a status symbol. Like people, dragons have different ways in which they display their hoard—some are neat and tidy, while others let it spill out in disarray. Regardless, a dragon knows the contents of its hoard down to the copper piece. It also carefully places key weapons and magic items in easy-to-access places in case of attack.

THE DRAGON ADVENTURER

A dragon who takes to a life of adventure likes to be prepared just as much as a human, dwarf, or elf. While dragons' physique and naturally high Constitution allow them to survive in almost any environment, a few bring gear with them as they venture out in the world, to make life more comfortable or to remind them of their lairs far away.

Dragons who *polymorph* commonly take along a backpack or outfit filled with typical adventuring gear—flint and steel, pots and pans, rope, and perhaps a tent. If a dragon is trying to travel undetected, masking itself as a humble priest or wandering adventurer is a great cover. Dragons who are less practical might bring along bolts of silk to sleep on or a small portion of their hoard to array around themselves at rest. Those who study and practice magic also craft scrolls, potions, and wands. To help them carry this equipment, they create and wear special harnesses, pouches, and packs suited to their unique shape (some of these items are described below).

While no dragon will ever stoop to being a mere pack animal, one who travels with humanoid companions might wear a harness, saddle, or special howdah that allows it to carry others. These items are most often used when a dragon knows that it will be heading into battle, bringing along a companion who can assist in the fighting.

Dragon Adventuring Gear

Listed here are some special items unique to dragons, especially those who take to adventuring or warfare. Note that encumbrance due to weight can change a dragon's flight capability. Consult the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for rules.

Dragon Harness: This leather harness is designed to fit a dragon's physique. It sports numerous loops, pouches, clips, hooks, and other connections, allowing the dragon to carry items much as a backpack does for a humanoid.

Dragon Howdah: A dragon howdah is a specially designed structure that fits underneath a dragon's torso and is incorporated into a suit of dragon barding. The howdah sets the maximum Dexterity bonus of the barding to +0, increases the armor check penalty by -2, and increases the arcane spell failure chance of the armor by +15%. Costs and weights for the dragon howdahs listed in the Dragon Adventuring Gear sidebar are in addition to the cost and weight of the barding the howdah is incorporated into.

DRAGON ADVENTURING GEAR

Item	Cost	Weight
Dragon Harness		
For a Tiny dragon	1 gp	2 lb.
For a Small dragon	4 gp	5 lb.
For a Medium dragon	8 gp	10 lb.
For a Large dragon	15 gp	20 lb.
For a Huge dragon	30 gp	40 lb.
For a Gargantuan dragon	60 gp	80 lb.
For a Colossal dragon	125 gp	160 lb.
Dragon Howdah		
Large	+400 gp	+280 lb.
Huge	+800 gp	+560 lb.
Gargantuan	+1,600 gp	+1,120 lb.
Dragon Saddle		
For a Tiny dragon	5 gp	4 lb.
For a Small dragon	15 gp	10 lb.
For a Medium dragon	30 gp	25 lb.
For a Large dragon	60 gp	40 lb.
For a Huge dragon	125 gp	80 lb.
For a Gargantuan dragon	250 gp	160 lb.
For a Colossal dragon	500 gp	320 lb.

This assembly, usually made of wood, allows humanoids to be carried aloft in a protective shell beneath the dragon, typically firing projectile weapons or casting spells through large slits along the side.

Occupants of the howdah benefit from nine-tenths cover. The howdah has a hardness of 5 and 40 hit points plus 10 hit points per the howdah's size category greater than Large. Occupants strap themselves down looking out a window while riding in a howdah; space inside is cramped, and moving in the howdah is difficult when the dragon is moving (Climb check DC 20).

Howdahs can fit dragons of various sizes and carry a certain number of occupants. A Large howdah is appropriate for a Huge dragon and can hold two Medium or Small creatures. A Huge howdah is appropriate for a Gargantuan dragon and can carry four Medium or Small creatures or two Large creatures. A Gargantuan howdah is appropriate for a Colossal dragon and can carry eight Medium or Small creatures or four Large creatures.

Dragon Saddle: These exotic saddles are designed to fit around the unique frame of a dragon and come only as military saddles. They have a number of ties, hooks, and straps to keep a rider in place while the dragon banks and turns in flight. A rider of any size category smaller than the dragon can ride it, but dragon saddles are designed with a particular size and shape of rider in mind and grant their benefits only to a creature of that size and shape.

A dragon saddle grants a +4 circumstance bonus on Ride checks to stay in the saddle, and a rider has a 90% chance of staying in the saddle if knocked unconscious. Such saddles often have a special socket to couch a lance or other large weapon to keep it in place if the rider switches to another weapon. Placing a weapon in the couch is a move-equivalent action, and the weapon can be retrieved like any weapon that a character stows in a sheath or on a belt.

A dragon saddle can be designed to allow more than one creature to ride the dragon. For each size category smaller the creature is than the largest creature that could ride the dragon, double the number of creatures the saddle can be designed to hold. For rules for multiple creatures riding the same mount, consult "Saddle Up" from *Dragon* #304.

DRAGON TAIL WEAPONS

Weapon	Cost	Damage	Critical	Range Increment	Weight	Type
Tail Blade	350 gp	Special	19-20/x2	–	30 lb.	Slashing
Tail Hammer	350 gp	Special	x3	–	45 lb.	Bludgeoning
Tail Pick	400 gp	Special	x4	–	35 lb.	Piercing

Tail Weapons

Dragons lack the manual dexterity to effectively wield weapons common to humanoids, but they have created special weapons that take advantage of their unique physiology—their tails.

Older dragons have powerful tails that can pummel a foe senseless with a single slap. Some have learned how to strap weapons onto their tails, allowing them to deal massive damage. To effectively use any of the weapons described below, a dragon must take the appropriate Exotic Weapon Proficiency feat. Wielding a tail weapon does not allow a dragon to take multiple attacks with its tail because of a high base attack bonus.

A tail weapon deals the same amount of damage as the dragon's tail slap attack, but it might change its type, as well as having a better chance of dealing critical damage (see the Dragon Tail Weapons sidebar). Tail weapons can also be enhanced with magic weapon qualities. A dragon must be at least size Large to wield tail weapons (the smallest size that allows dragon to make a tail slap attack).

Tail Blade: This double-edged blade is effectively a greatsword.

Tail Hammer: This consists of a solid metal ball attached to the end of the dragon's tail.

Tail Pick: This double-headed heavy pick is flailed back and forth to cause massive, penetrating wounds.

A DRAGON SADDLE CAN BE DESIGNED TO ALLOW MORE THAN ONE CREATURE TO RIDE THE DRAGON.

DRAGON MAGIC ITEMS

Characters are limited in their ability to use certain magic items based on the item's type. Dragons have similar limitations, and because magic items that must be worn usually fit users of any size, a dragon can use many magic items that a humanoid character can.

Spell Completion Items: A dragon without any spellcasting ability cannot use items that require spell completion or a spell trigger—even if it has one or more spell-like abilities.

An older dragon naturally casts spells as a sorcerer and is an arcane spellcaster; it cannot cast a divine spell from a scroll unless it has a class that makes it divine spellcaster.

Spell Trigger Items: A dragon that can cast spells as a sorcerer can use any spell trigger item that contains a sorcerer/wizard spell. If the dragon can also cast cleric or druid spells as

arcane spells, it also can use any spell trigger item that contains arcane versions of those spells.

Magic Weapons: A dragon usually lacks weapon proficiencies and fully prehensile appendages, so it cannot employ weapons. If a dragon assumes a form with prehensile appendages it can wield weapons while in that form, but remains nonproficient unless it has a class or feat that makes it proficient (as noted earlier, a dragon with the racial spell-like ability to polymorph itself is proficient with all simple weapons).

Magic Armor: A dragon is not proficient with any kind of armor. In any case, armor crafted for a humanoid does not fit a dragon's body. Armor created for a dragon resembles barding and will not fit a humanoid, but it will fit a quadruped. Note that along with the usual effects of wearing armor that apply, such as a maximum Dexterity bonus and armor check penalty, arcane spell failure applies to the spells a dragon casts as a sorcerer. Arcane spell failure does not apply to the spell-like abilities of dragons. Note that encumbrance due to weight and a speed reduction due to armor can change a dragon's flight capability. Consult the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for rules.

Magic Shields: A dragon can't effectively wield a shield, but dragons do enjoy the benefits of an animated shield.

Potions: Any dragon is capable of using potions. In most circumstances, a dragon doesn't even bother opening a potion container, it simply swallows or chews up the container. Because a dragon can eat just about anything, this doesn't cause any problems for the dragon, nor does it affect the potion in any special way.

Headband: A dragon can use one headband, hat, helmet, crown, diadem, or skullcap normally.

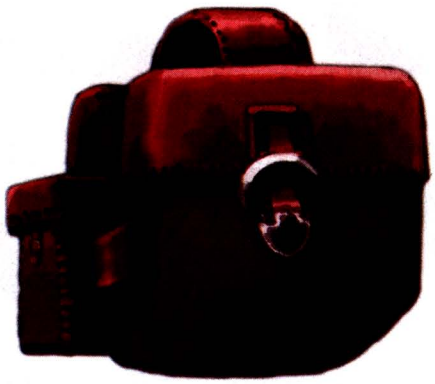
Pair of Goggles: A dragon can use goggles or lenses normally. Goggles and lenses made specifically for dragons usually come in the form of cusps that fit over the dragon's eyes or lenses the dragon places directly on the eye. A humanoid character can use any special dragon item of this kind without difficulty.

Cloak: A dragon can wear one cloak, cape, or mantle on its back, usually between the wings. Items of this sort can come in the form of a frill stud or spine cap instead. A humanoid character can use a frill stud or spine cap simply by affixing it to a nonmagical cloak, cape, or mantle.

Amulet: A dragon can wear one magic amulet, brooch, medallion, necklace, or periapt around its neck, just as a humanoid does.

Robe: A dragon can wear one robe over its shoulders and upper chest. In some cases, an item of this kind can be specially made for a dragon as a collar or epaulette. A humanoid can wear such an item without difficulty.

Vest: A dragon can wear one vest, vestment, or shirt draped around its wings and lower chest. In some cases, an item of this kind can be specially made for a dragon as a pectoral or belly stud. A humanoid can wear a magical dragon pectoral as though it were a vest. It can wear a belly stud in its navel, and it then takes the place of a magic vest.



THE LEATHER HARNESS SPORTS NUMEROUS LOOPS, POUCHES, CLIPS, HOOKS, AND OTHER CONNECTIONS.

Pair of Bracers: A dragon can fit bracers or bracelets over its lower forelimbs.

Pair of Gloves: A dragon can wear gloves or gauntlets on its forefeet. Specially made dragon gauntlets usually have no "fingers," just holes for the dragon's claws. A humanoid can wear magical dragon gauntlets without difficulty.

Rings: A dragon can wear two rings, one on each of its forefeet.

Belt: A dragon can wear a belt around its midsection. Sometimes, items of this kind take the form of bands the dragon wears on its hips. A humanoid can wear such items without difficulty.

Pair of Boots: A dragon can wear boots on its hind feet. Specially made dragon boots usually resemble a dragon's gauntlets, but shaped for the hind feet. These magic items also fit humanoid feet.

New Magic Items

With their deep understanding of magic and great stores of treasure, dragons have access to many unique and powerful magic items. Although few dragons create magic items on their own, they can easily convince, cajole, or force other creatures into helping them create specialized items. Many of the items that dragons employ are specifically made for their use, but evil dragons especially are not above turning a fallen adventurer's gear against her companions.

Dragon-created items are distinctive not only for their obvious physical characteristics but also because they focus on improving or enhancing the dragon's already fomidible offensive and defensive abilities rather than providing new abilities, much like dragon magic.

Draught of Fast Breath

This potion looks like quicksilver. When imbibed, it reduces the number of rounds between the dragon's breath weapon attacks by 1 (to a minimum of 1 round). This effect lasts for 1 hour, after which the dragon cannot use its breath weapon for 1 hour. A nondragon who drinks the potion must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 15) or become nauseated for 1d4 rounds. Nauseated creatures cannot attack, cast spells, concentrate on spells, or take other actions that require attention, and they can only make a single move each round.

Caster Level: 5th; **Prerequisites:** Brew Potion, *haste;* **Market Price:** 1,500 gp; **Cost to Create:** 750 gp + 60 XP; **Weight:** —.

Draught of Improved Senses

This potion improves a dragon's already keen senses. For 1 hour, the imbiber can see normally in low-light conditions and four times as far in normal light. The dragon's darkvision increases to 200 feet times the dragon's age category, and its blindsight range increases to 50 feet times the dragon's age category. If imbibed by a nondragon, the draught acts as a poison, dealing initial and secondary damage of 1d4 points of Wisdom damage (Fortitude save DC 15).

Caster Level: 5th; **Prerequisites:** Brew Potion, *clairaudience/clairvoyance, darkvision;* **Market Price:** 1,500 gp; **Cost to Create:** 750 gp + 60 XP; **Weight:** —.

Fallen Armor

So named because it is crafted from the scales of a slain dragon, this *+3 hide barding* is more like a grisly second skin than a crafted suit of armor. It provides protection against certain types of damage, depending on the type worn. Other dragons react with hostility to one who dares to wear such a foul item, especially if the *fallen armor* is of their color. Chromatic dragons are more likely than other dragons to make and use *fallen armor,* although metallic dragons sometimes wear it to inspire fear and prove their superiority over evil dragons.

Although *fallen armor* has been around for as long as dragons can remember, one myth of dragonkind specifically mentions this macabre form of protection. Three thousand years before the current era, a coalition of black, blue, and red dragons began a wave of terror against all other dragons, culling weaker individuals regardless of color, alignment, or creed. In their bloodlust and insanity, the dragons flayed and wore the carcasses of their foes as a sign of their might. Close to two score dragons were killed and desecrated before the coalition wiped itself out through treachery and infighting. Most of the *fallen armor* was destroyed, but a few suits remained, inspiring irreverent dragons to kill other dragons for their hides.

To make *fallen armor,* the creator must use the hide of a dragon at least one size category larger than itself. Once created, however, the armor resizes to fit any dragon of the creator's size or larger.

Fallen armor provides additional effects according to its color, as follows:

- **Black:** Acid resistance 10.
- **Blue:** Electricity resistance 10.
- **Brass:** Fire resistance 5. In addition, the dragon can cast *suggestion* once per day as though cast by a 9th-level caster.
- **Bronze:** Electricity resistance 5. In addition, the dragon can cast *water breathing* once per day as though cast by a 9th-level caster.
- **Copper:** Acid resistance 5. In addition, the dragon can use *spider climb* three times per day as though cast by a 9th-level caster.
- **Gold:** Fire resistance 5. In addition, the dragon can use *bless* three times per day as though cast by a 9th-level caster.
- **Green:** Acid resistance 5. In addition, the dragon can use *water breathing* once per day as though cast by a 9th-level caster.
- **Red:** Fire resistance 10.
- **Silver:** Cold resistance 5 and acid resistance 5.
- **White:** Cold resistance 10.

Caster Level: 5th (black, blue, red, silver, white), 9th (brass, bronze, copper, gold, green); *Prerequisites:* Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *bless* (gold), *protection from energy, spider climb* (copper), *water breathing* (bronze, green), *suggestion* (brass); **Market Price:** 36,300 gp; **Cost to Create:** 18,150 gp + 1,452 XP; **Weight:** 200 lb.

ARMOR CREATED FOR A DRAGON RESEMBLES BARDING AND WILL NOT FIT A HUMANOID, BUT IT WILL FIT A QUADRUPED.

Gem of Egg Guarding

These gems were first created by Xanaxorath, a brass dragon who lived in a desert plagued by marauding blue and red dragons. After her lair was raided repeatedly, each time with the loss of egg clutches, she vowed it would never happen again. She crafted the *gems of egg guarding* and placed them with several batches of her eggs. She was killed soon afterward in another raid, but her safeguards proved successful and her brood remained safe. In time, Xanaxorath's children grew in power and took revenge for the death of their mother. Since that time, the secret of the *gem of egg guarding* has been passed to other dragons.

A *gem of egg guarding* looks like a fine but normal precious gem of at least 100 gp value. When placed within 5 feet of a nest of dragon eggs and the command word spoken, the gem produces continuous *screen* and *globe of invulnerability* effects. The *globe of invulnerability* surrounds the eggs, and the *screen* depicts the area as though it is empty. Both effects end as soon as all the eggs have hatched or if there are no surviving hatchlings within 5 feet, but they activate again if the gem is placed near another clutch of dragon eggs.

Caster Level: 15th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *screen, globe of invulnerability;* **Market Price:** 60,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 30,000 gp + 2,400 XP; **Weight:** —.

Gem of Enhanced Scent

This gem is placed in the mouth of a creature, who does not swallow it.

When held in this way, the creature cannot cast spells with a verbal component, but the *gem of enhanced scent* increases the range of the creature's scent ability by 100 feet.

Caster Level: 9th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *control winds*; **Market Price:** 2,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 1,000 gp + 80 XP; **Weight:** —.

Gloves of Small Grasping

Tilizorrill, a green dragon who intently studied the magical practices of humanoids, created the first pair of *gloves of small grasping.* Unlike other dragons, he preferred using magic items and weapons made for humanoids. He crafted these gloves to handle relatively small items and weapons, letting him pick up even the tiniest objects with great agility.

These tight leather gloves are open at the tips, allowing the claws to remain uncovered. When worn, they provide a +2 enhancement bonus to Dexterity. In addition, they allow a creature of any size to manipulate objects as if it had the hands of a Medium creature, including spell components, weapons, and the like. (To use weapons effectively, however, a the creature must be proficient with the weapon.)

Caster Level: 3rd; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *cat's grace;* **Market Price:** 10,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 5,000 gp + 400 XP; **Weight:** —.

Gorget of Frightful Presence

A horrible and vicious red dragon named Virtivirill first wore the *gorget of frightful presence.* She took delight in lording it over the subjects in her self-claimed dominion, terrorizing them whenever she saw fit. To aid in this, she had some of her dwarven slaves craft this gorget—then ate them for their efforts.

This spiked collar inscribed with screaming faces enhances a dragon's frightful presence ability. The range of the dragon's frightful presence increases to 60 feet times the dragon's age category.

Caster Level: 7th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *fear;* **Market Price:** 6,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 3,000 gp + 240 XP; **Weight:** —.

Lair Guardian

This magic longspear was first crafted by Anistilisor, an ancient silver dragon who spent almost all of her time *polymorphed* into the shape of an elven warrior. She loathed to leave her mountain home and was far more xenophobic and suspicious than other silver dragons. Yet Anistilisor was a loving mother and produced a huge number of offspring that she guarded fiercely. She created the *lair guardian* to let her watch over her eggs regardless of where she was in her vast mountain home. Whenever her lair was invaded or attacked—mainly by other dragons, but occasionally from marauding bands of dwarves who lived on the mountain's lower slopes—the weapon's *guards and wards* ability confused, trapped, and eliminated foes one by one. A cunning pair of adult blue dragons eventually killed Anistilisor and stole her *lair guardian* to defend their own caves. Others have since learned the secret of its making.

THIS DOUBLE-EDGED BLADE IS EFFECTIVELY A GREATSWORD.

The longspear's shaft is covered in small dragonscales, and its blade resembles a dragon's head. When wielded by a true dragon, a *lair guardian* functions as a *+2 bane longspear.* The bane ability is decided by the creator, typically keyed to a type of creature commonly found in the dragon's territory. In addition, the *lair guardian* allows the wielder to cast *clairaudience/clairvoyance* three times per day and *guards and wards* once per day as a 12th-level caster.

Caster Level: 12th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *clairaudience/clairvoyance, guards and wards, summon monster I;* **Market Price:** 156,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 78,000 gp + 6,240 XP; **Weight:** 9 lb.

Membrane of Jaunting

This vest is clear with scintillating colors. When stretched over a dragon's wings, it leaves only a shiny, metallic sheen to indicate that it is there. While wearing the *membrane of jaunting,* the dragon can cast *ethereal jaunt* once per day as a 11th-level caster.

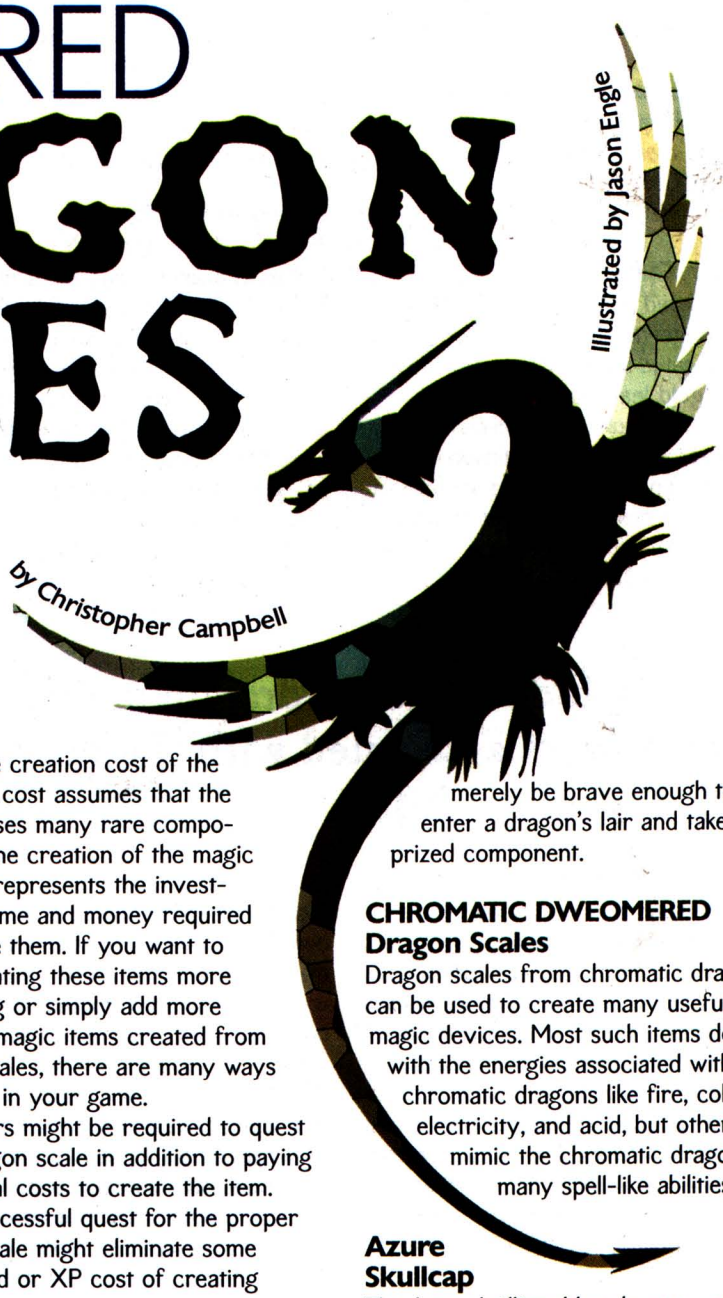
Caster Level: 11th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *ethereal jaunt;* **Market Price:** 26,400 gp; **Cost to Create:** 13,200 gp + 1,025 XP; **Weight:** 1 lb.

Membrane of Turning

This clear wing covering comes in a small black pouch. When this vest is stretched over a dragon's wings, it leaves only a glossy sheen to indicate that it is there. While wearing the *membrane of turning,* the dragon can turn up to 180 degrees per round in flight as if it had the Wingover feat. If the dragon already has the feat, it can turn up to 270 degrees per round while in flight regardless of its maneuverability.

Caster Level: 5th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *fly, haste;* **Market Price:** 24,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 12,000 gp + 960 XP; **Weight:** 1 lb.

DWEOMERED DRAGON SCALES



Illustrated by Jason Engle

by Christopher Campbell

Mahgren Dragonchild paused before the enormous tome, calming the butterflies in his stomach. This was his prize, his dream, the reason he had betrayed his sire. There were secrets Kraagothial had refused to share; those secrets were Mahgren's birthright, and now he had them. The ancient blue dragon had sneered when questioned about the legends of dragon scales, sneered when Mahgren begged for a boon from his draconic father. Now the dragon's grin was a rictus, his long tongue dangling out, a moist landing place for flies. He would sneer at his half-dragon son no more. Mahgren took a deep breath and opened the book . . . .

The secrets of dweomered dragon scales' manufacture are jealously guarded by their draconic creators. However, such hidden lore sets adventurers into motion, so the descriptions that follow include creation details to aid you when you finally reveal those secrets to the PCs. Once the process is known, creating a dweomered dragon scale can become an adventure in itself.

MAKING DWEOMERED Dragon Scales Special

This article assumes that the creator of a dweomered dragon scale simply purchases the dragon scale as part of the gold piece creation cost of the item. This cost assumes that the creator uses many rare components in the creation of the magic item and represents the investment of time and money required to acquire them. If you want to make creating these items more interesting or simply add more flavor to magic items created from dragon scales, there are many ways to do this in your game.

- Players might be required to quest for a dragon scale in addition to paying the normal costs to create the item.
- A successful quest for the proper dragon scale might eliminate some of the gold or XP cost of creating the item.
- The scale might need to come from a living dragon, and that dragon might not be willing to give up one of its scales. If the dragon dies, the magic item might lose some of its power.
- Perhaps a dragon must willingly grant one of its scales for use as a dweomered dragon scale or the scale cannot be used (or does not eliminate gold or XP cost from the creation cost if you decide to use that option).
- In your game, the scale might need to come from a very recently killed dragon to be of any use.
- Maybe dragons shed scales like humans shed their hair, and one must merely be brave enough to enter a dragon's lair and take the prized component.

CHROMATIC DWEOMERED Dragon Scales

Dragon scales from chromatic dragons can be used to create many useful magic devices. Most such items deal with the energies associated with chromatic dragons like fire, cold, electricity, and acid, but others mimic the chromatic dragons' many spell-like abilities.

Azure Skullcap

This large, brilliant blue dragon scale is edged in mithral and set with blue sapphires and tourmalines in a decorative pattern. It fits snugly over the head, occupying the same space as a magic helm or hat.

Once per day, the wearer of an *azure skullcap* can use it to cast *lightning bolt* as an 8th-level caster. Anyone donning an *azure skullcap* receives mental instructions in Draconic on how to activate the ability. A *skullcap* also grants electricity resistance 15 and a +2 natural armor bonus to AC.

These items are popular among wizards and sorcerers for use as hidden weapons. Skullcaps are commonplace

among arcane spellcasters, and activating the item's ability is purely mental (although still requiring a standard action).

Caster Level: 8th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *barkskin, lightning bolt, protection from energy;* **Market Price:** 51,200 gp; **Cost to Create:** 25,600 gp + 2,048 XP; **Weight:** 1 lb.

Crimson Claw

This small red dragon scale resembles a false fingernail for a finger or claw. It is decorated with a flame pattern in delicate gold leaf and magically adheres to cover the wearer's existing nail. Anyone donning a *crimson claw* receives mental instructions in Draconic on how to activate its abilities. A *crimson claw* does not interfere with any claw attack the wearer might have, but it ceases to function if covered by a gauntlet or glove.

Three times per day, the wearer of a *crimson claw* can cast *burning hands* as the spell cast by a 5th-level caster. A *crimson claw* also grants fire resistance 15 and a +2 natural armor bonus to AC.

Caster Level: 5th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *barkskin, burning hands, protection from energy;* **Market Price:** 44,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 22,000 gp + 1,760 XP; **Weight:** —.

Ebon Mask

This dull black dragon scale is edged in iron. It is roughly triangular in shape and slightly larger than a human fist when not worn. If held to the face, it magically adheres to cover the nose and mouth. An *ebon mask* grants the ability to breathe water and does not interfere with air breathing in any way. It also grants acid resistance 15 and a +2 natural armor bonus to AC. Only the wearer can remove an *ebon mask* unless he is unconscious or killed, in which case it detaches easily.

While highly prized for its obvious benefits, an *ebon mask* has a drawback: It muffles speech, imposing a 20% chance of spell failure on spells with verbal components.

Caster Level: 6th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *barkskin, protection from energy, water breathing;* **Market Price:** 60,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 30,000 gp + 2,400 XP; **Weight:** 1 lb.

Emerald Eye Patch

This scintillating green dragon scale is 2 inches in diameter and features a faceted emerald in its center. If held to the face, it magically adheres to cover one eye. Anyone donning an *emerald eye patch* receives mental instructions in Draconic on how to activate its ability. Only the wearer can remove it unless she is unconscious or killed, in which case it detaches easily.

The wearer of an *emerald eye patch* can rebuke or command plant creatures, just like the granted power of the Plant domain, as a 15th-level cleric a number of times per day equal to 3 + the wearer's Charisma modifier (minimum of once per day). This stacks with uses granted by the domain power. In addition, the wearer can detect plants at will as if using the *detect animals or plants* spell cast by a 15th-level caster, but this ability can only detect plants.

Caster Level: 15th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *control plants;* **Market Price:** 96,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 48,000 gp + 3,840 XP; **Weight:** —.

Opalescent Amulet

This milky white dragon scale is framed by a silver setting and hangs from a filigree chain. Tiny opals stud the surface of the dragon scale in a snowflake pattern.

An *opalescent amulet* grants the ice-walking ability of a white dragon, as well as cold resistance 15 and a +2 natural armor bonus to AC. The ice-walking ability functions as the *spider climb* spell in icy areas (see the spell description in the *Player's Handbook* for more information).

Caster Level: 6th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *barkskin, protection from energy, spider climb;* **Market Price:** 33,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 16,500 gp + 1,320 XP; **Weight:** —.

METALLIC DWEOMERED Dragon Scales

Magic item crafters tend to use metallic dragon scales to create magic items that less directly deal with the elements and energies associated with the dragon's type than the items made from chromatic dragon scales. Even so, each dweomered dragon scale has powers deeply associated with the metallic dragon scale used to create the item.

Brassy Bracers

Each about the size and shape of a man's fist, these brass dragon scales are edged in mithral and set with moonstones in a spiral pattern. Affixed to the back of each is a buckle and leather strap so they can be worn on the forearms. Upon securing the *brassy bracers,* the wearer receives mental instructions in Draconic on how to activate their ability.

Once per day, the wearer of *brassy bracers* can surround herself in a swirling shield of superheated air for up to 10 minutes. The shimmering heat waves provide concealment for the wearer causing attacks against the wearer to suffer a 20% miss chance. In addition, the heat deals 4d6 points of fire damage to any creatures attacking the wearer with a natural attack or melee weapon and any creatures grappling with the wearer. Creatures immune to fire or using manufactured weapons with reach take no damage from the heat. When the swirling shield is engaged, the wearer does not gain fire resistance or immunity, but the wearer suffers half damage from cold and is immune to the heat damage of her own bracers.

Caster Level: 10th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *blur, fire shield;* **Market Price:** 64,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 32,000 gp + 2,560 XP; **Weight:** 1 lb.

Bronzed Cuff

Shaped to fit easily on a creature's wrist, this bronze dragon scale is set with a pair of tiger's eye topazes and rimmed with bronze studs. A *bronzed cuff* can be worn with magic bracers on the same arm without affecting the

Each dweomered dragon scale has powers associated with the dragon it was taken from.

ability of either magic item, but it does not work when a magic ring is worn on the same arm. When donned, it mentally informs the wearer of its abilities in Draconic.

As a free action, a *bronzed cuff* generates a *+1 brilliant energy shock whip* in the hand of the limb wearing it. Because the brilliant energy ability ignores nonliving matter, the whip cannot disarm opponents; however, its wielder also cannot be disarmed. The whip can still be used to make trip attacks against living creatures, and the wielder may deactivate a *bronzed cuff* as a free action to avoid being tripped in return on a failure.

A *bronzed cuff* grants immunity to electricity as long as it is worn.

Caster Level: 16th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *call lightning* or *lightning bolt, continual flame, gaseous form, protection from energy;* **Market Price:** 125,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 62,500 gp + 5,000 XP; **Weight:** —.

Cupric Brooch

This small copper dragon scale is set in a rectangular granite frame affixed to a metal pin. Despite its name, it hangs from a chain or thong like an amulet. *Cupric brooches* are a secret jealously guarded by dao, who give them to loyal slaves to help them navigate the Elemental Plane of Earth and earthen barriers on the Material Plane.

A *cupric brooch* enables its wearer to both move and breathe freely when passing through any type of stone or earth (but not magma or lava). Unfortunately, this does not grant the wearer of the brooch the ability to see within stone and earth, and the wearer's speed is likely halved along with the other effects of blindness. The wearer travels as though walking (or swimming if that would result in a faster movement rate) and can walk in any direction through earth and stone. The wearer cannot pass through stone or earthen creatures.

Caster Level: 9th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *avoid planar effects* (from *Manual of the Planes*) or *meld into stone, xorn movement* (from *Manual of the Planes*) or *passwall;* **Market Price:** 175,500 gp; **Cost to Create:** 87,750 gp + 7,020 XP; **Weight:** —.

Golden Visor

This gold dragon scale is edged in steel and pierced with viewing slits, looking very much like the visor of a helmet (which it is). It displays no magical abilities until attached to a normal helm, at which time its powers manifest. A *golden visor* does not function if attached to a magic helm.

Dragon scales taken from lung dragons can be used to create unique and powerful items.

The wearer of a helm fitted with a *golden visor* gains 100-foot darkvision and 30-foot blindsight. In addition, the wearer gains low-light vision twice as good as an elf's, seeing four times as well as a human in low-light conditions. It also generates an aura of menace with a range of 30 feet, forcing creatures with fewer HD than the wearer to make a successful Will save (DC 15) or be unable to approach. Compelling a creature into the aura by moving close to it negates the menacing effect on that creature for 1 day, as does a successful save.

Caster Level: 11th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *clairaudience/clairvoyance, darkvision, invisibility purge, repulsion;* **Market Price:** 212,500 gp; **Cost to Create:** 106,250 gp + 8,500 XP; **Weight:** 1 lb.

Sterling Collar

This silver dragon scale is expertly shaped to fit around the throat and is studded with chrysoberyls and white pearls. When donned, it mentally reveals its abilities to the wearer in Draconic. A *sterling collar* counts as a necklace when considering what magic items work in combination.

The wearer of a *sterling collar* is able to walk on clouds just as a silver dragon does (treat this as an *air walk* spell that works only in fog or clouds). This ability is always in effect while the collar is worn, even if the wearer is unconscious. In addition, a *sterling collar* grants cold resistance 15 and a +2 natural armor bonus to AC.

Caster Level: 9th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *air walk, barkskin, protection from energy;* **Market Price:** 54,400 gp; **Cost to Create:** 27,200 gp + 2,176 XP; **Weight:** 1 lb.

ORIENTAL DWEOMERED

Dragon Scales

The dragons from *Oriental Adventures* have varied and unique abilities, and magic items crafted from the scales of these creatures are similarly wondrous. Dweomered dragon scales based on the lung dragons from *Oriental Adventures* often have spells from that supplement as prerequisites. Such spells are indicated with an asterisk (*). Alternate prerequisite spells from the *Player's Handbook* have been provided.

Beruto of the Carp Dragon

This hemp belt is decorated with seashells and features a yu lung dragon scale fashioned into a buckle. Anyone donning a *beruto of the carp dragon* gains the aquatic subtype as long as it is worn, with the following effects: ability to breathe fresh or saltwater (but not air), a swim speed equal to the wearer's base land speed, and a +8 racial bonus on Swim checks. The wearer can always choose to take 10 when swimming and is able to use the run action if swimming in a straight line. If a *beruto of the carp dragon* is worn on dry land, the wearer must hold his breath or suffocation begins the round after the wearer emerges from the water or the *beruto* is donned (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

Caster Level: 7th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *alter self* or *swim*, water breathing;* **Market Price:** 22,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 11,000 gp + 880 XP; **Weight:** 1 lb.

Fiery Kabuto of the Celestial Dragon

This extremely ornate helm is decorated with red and yellow enamel and features a large t'ien lung dragon scale as its central decoration. When first donned, it informs the wearer of its abilities in the Spirit Tongue.

Once per day on command, a *fiery kabuto of the celestial dragon* creates a sphere of fire centered on the wearer. Initially, the flames only surround the

wearer, who takes no damage from the swirling fire; however, anyone attacking the wearer with a melee weapon or a natural attack or that grapples the wearer suffers 1d6 points of fire damage per round of contact. Multiple attacks against the wearer by the same creature in one round do not result in it suffering fire damage more than once. By taking a full-round action and making a successful Concentration check (DC 15 + any damage taken during the full-round action), the wearer may increase the diameter of the sphere by 10 feet and the damage dealt by +1d6, to a maximum of 4d6 points of fire damage per round for a 30-foot diameter sphere. Once the sphere's area of effect has been increased, no concentration is needed to maintain the new size. Creatures within the area suffer fire damage automatically each round but only once per round no matter how many times they enter or exit the area during the round.

While sheathed in the flames, the wearer is immune to cold and fire damage; the sphere remains for 3 minutes or until dismissed. Note that wearing a kabuto is a right normally reserved for samurai.

Caster Level: 13th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, Enlarge Spell, *fires of purity** or *fire shield;* **Market Price:** 137,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 68,500 gp + 5,480 XP; **Weight:** 3 lb.

Iyaringu of the Earth Dragon

This earring is fashioned from one of a li lung's peacock-like quills and decorated with jade beads and pieces of red coral. Large and gaudy, an *iyaringu of the earth dragon* doesn't function with a magic helm or hat. Versions for both pierced and non-pierced ears have been discovered.

An *iyaringu of the earth dragon* grants sure footing to its wearer, allowing her to move at normal speed over mud, quicksand, sand, and uneven terrain, and to remain standing during earthquakes. It has the same effect when the wearer encounters similar magical obstacles, but it does not negate any damage that might be dealt. For example, a wearer entering the area of a *spike stones* spell is not reduced to half speed but still takes 1d8 points of damage for every 5 feet of movement.

Caster Level: 5th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *freedom of movement, water walk;* **Market Price:** 30,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 15,000 gp + 1,200 XP; **Weight:** —.

Kodate of the Spirit Dragon

This *+4 small shield* is fashioned from silver-plated steel and has a shen lung dragon scale embedded in its center. Its bearer is able to converse in the Spirit Tongue and, once per day, become ethereal as per the *ethereal jaunt* spell cast by a 10th-level caster for up to 10 rounds.

The scale of a red dragon is an excellent component in items that have power over fire.

Caster Level: 10th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *ethereal jaunt, tongues;* **Market Price:** 53,160 gp; **Cost to Create:** 26,580 gp + 2,126 XP; **Weight:** 6 lb.

Kuribune of the River Dragon

This 6-inch-diameter chiang lung dragon scale is decorated with blue and green enamel, the interior studded with freshwater pearls arranged like benches in a tiny rowboat. It is usually stored in a watertight black lacquer box. While it appears to be simply a decorative object, it reveals its true power when it touches water.

Whenever a *kuribune of the river dragon* comes in contact with water and the command word is spoken, it enlarges into a normal 12-foot rowboat that can hold up to three Medium creatures. The boat follows simple one-word commands from someone sitting in the prow such as "start," "stop," "left," "right," and so on, and travels at a constant speed of 10 feet per round (subject to the current and rowing). Sprinkling a handful of sand or dirt into the boat returns it to dragon scale form.

Caster Level: 12th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, 5 ranks of Craft (shipmaking), *contingency, fabricate, find the path;* **Market Price:** 6,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 3,000 gp + 240 XP; **Weight:** 1 lb.

Pearly Okimono of the Sea Dragon

This ornate lung wang dragon scale is 12 inches in diameter and inlaid with mother-of-pearl, coral, and white pearls depicting an ocean scene. Many ship captains keep a *pearly okimono of the sea dragon* in their cabins, although smaller vessels have one mounted on their bows for decoration. It is a mark of prestige to possess one, as these items greatly benefit warships, exploratory vessels, and fishers alike.

When carried aboard a waterborne vessel, a *pearly okimono of the sea dragon* grants a +10 bonus on any Profession (sailor) checks made to control the ship by someone on the vessel. It also increases the vessel's hardness by 5 and halves any chance the ship has of capsizing in rough water.

Caster Level: 11th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *commune with nature* or *commune with greater spirit**, *control winds, ironwood;* **Market Price:** 75,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 37,500 gp + 3,000 XP; **Weight:** 6 lb.

Tarekazari of the Coiled Dragon

This amulet is fashioned from a pan lung dragon scale decorated with silver and amethysts. It hangs from a silver chain and bears an inscription that reads, "Honor thine ancestors."

When placed on the remains of a creature, a *tarekazari of the coiled dragon* recites five generations of the creature's ancestors and then allows three questions to be asked of the creature's spirit, subject to all the restrictions of a *speak with dead* spell cast by a 7th-level caster. This ability can be used three times a day. Once per week, a *tarekazari of the coiled dragon* can render a creature's remains immune to reanimation as an undead creature by spell or magic item. This effect is permanent.

Caster Level: 7th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *hallow* or *dispel taint**, *legend lore, speak with dead;* **Market Price:** 75,360 gp; **Cost to Create:** 37,680 gp + 3,014 XP; **Weight:** —.

Watery Hachimaki of the Typhoon Dragon

This blue silk headband is sewn with black pearls and features a tun mi lung dragon scale as its central ornament. Once per day, the wearer can cast *control weather,* and twice per day the user can cast *control winds.* Both spells have effects as though cast by a 13th-level caster.

Caster Level: 13th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *control weather, control winds;* **Market Price:** 124,800 gp; **Cost to Create:** 62,400 gp + 4,992 XP; **Weight:** —.

FORGOTTEN REALMS Dweomered Dragon Scales

The following dweomered dragon scales come from dragons that can be found in *Monsters of Faerûn.* Like other dweomered dragon scales, their powers take the form of aspects of the dragon the scale came from.

Amber Pinwheel

Resembling an ornate child's toy, this brown dragon scale is gilded with rose gold. It is pierced in the middle and fastened to a short silver rod, allowing it to spin freely. An *amber pinwheel* has two abilities, both activated by setting it into the ground and speaking a command word.

One command word causes the *amber pinwheel* to create an invisible dome of force 10 feet high and 20 feet in diameter. The dome blocks particulate matter (dust, sand, snow, and the like) and nonmagical projectiles of any size. Magic projectiles, spells, water, gas attacks, and wind (but not flying debris) are not impeded. This applies on both sides of the dome; nonmagical ranged attacks cannot be fired out from within. Any material covering the dome when this effect ends fills the space formerly occupied by the dome. A second command word creates the illusion of a sand dune with the same dimensions as the dome of force. Both abilities can be in effect at once. If dislodged from its location, an *amber pinwheel's* effects end.

The secret of manufacturing *amber pinwheels* is known to the jann as well as certain tribes of nomads dwelling in the Raurin desert of Faerûn.

Caster Level: 10th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *hallucinatory terrain, wall of force;* **Market Price:** 39,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 19,500 gp + 1,560 XP; **Weight:** 3 lb.

Dark Clasp

This blackish-purple deep dragon scale comes in two parts, which fit together to form a twining serpent. A *dark clasp* usually fastens a cloak, but it can secure any type of clothing.

The wearer of a *dark clasp* gains a slightly ophidian feature, usually vertical pupils, and gains the ability to make a single melee attack each round with a reach 5-feet longer than normal, either by elongating the neck to bring the head within range for a bite attack (if the wearer has one) or by elongating a limb when striking with a natural or manufactured weapon. The attack must be made with one limb, so the wearer of this item cannot gain greater reach with a weapon wielded two-handed. This ability is physically taxing and may only be used a number of times per day equal to 3 + the wearer's Constitution bonus.

This ability can also allow a standard action performed one-handed (such as picking up a set of keys outside a cell) to be performed with 5 more feet of reach.

Caster Level: 7th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *alter self, polymorph;* **Market Price:** 24,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 12,000 gp + 960 XP; **Weight:** —.

Fanged Ring

Protruding 3 inches above its setting, this gray fang dragon scale is set in a heavy gold band. The ring appears clunky but does not interfere with any actions requiring Dexterity checks.

A *fanged ring* increases by one step the amount of damage the wearer deals with an unarmed strike. (Use the old and new damage table in the *Monster Manual* to determine the new damage value.) It also grants the Improved Unarmed Strike feat. Finally, a *fanged ring* deals 1 point of temporary Constitution damage with each critical hit in addition to dealing double damage.

Caster Level: 12th; **Prerequisites:** Forge Ring, *divine power, poison;* **Market Value:** 10,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 5,000 gp + 400 XP; **Weight:** —.

Shadowy Diadem

This black iron headband is studded with onyx and black sapphires, with a triangular shadow dragon scale affixed to its center. When worn, a *shadowy diadem* cloaks its wearer in a swirling mass of darkness that provides concealment (20% miss chance) and grants immunity to energy drain effects.

Caster Level: 5th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *blur, death ward;* **Market Price:** 69,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 34,500 gp + 2,760 XP; **Weight:** —.

Displaying a dweomered dragon scale can invite the ire (or the avarice) of any dragon.

Sonorous Scale

This song dragon scale is decorated with a variety of precious metals and gems with no discernable pattern or form. Speaking a command word causes a *sonorous scale* to change into an attractive piece of jewelry—such as a brooch, pendant, bracelet, circlet, or amulet—of the speaker's choice. This magic item does not inhibit the functionality of any other magic item, including when it is shaped like another item the user wears. A second command word changes it back to its normal form. The piece of jewelry may be worn by anyone but, once donned, only the wearer can safely touch it until it is deactivated.

When worn as a piece of jewelry, a *sonorous scale* acts as both a protective device and a theft deterrent. If someone tries to remove it from its wearer, it delivers a powerful shock, dealing 3d8 points of electricity damage, and emits a high-pitched keening sound clearly audible for within 1,000 feet. It makes this noise until removed or until the wearer is killed. The wearer can also activate or deactivate the keening with a command word.

Caster Level: 6th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, Enlarge Spell, *alarm, shocking grasp;* **Market Price:** 24,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 12,000 gp + 960 XP; **Weight:** —. D

DEMON FORESTS

THE ECOLOGY OF THE IRONMAW

By Skip Williams · illustrated by David Walhstrom

Adventurers and sages familiar with the denizens of the Outer Planes have long been aware of the deadly ironmaw, an insatiable predatory plant from the Infinite Layers of the Abyss. The creature gets its name from its most ghastly feature: a gaping maw capable of engulfing an ogre in one gulp and crushing the victim in an inexorable grip, like a massive iron vise.

The ironmaw remained virtually unknown on the Material Plane until recent decades, when it managed to establish itself in the forests of the Material Plane, probably from seeds unwittingly carried out of the Abyss by adventurers. Although it remains fairly rare, an ironmaw can turn the most idyllic-looking glade into a sinister and dangerous place.

An ironmaw has a certain low cunning and the ability to speak Abyssal, but it usually concerns itself with securing a steady supply of food and thinks of little else. It has no taste for vegetable matter or carrion but otherwise will eat virtually anything—and it is always hungry. Anyone who attempts to parley with an ironmaw had best stay alert. Although simple-minded, it is fully capable of lying to draw a potential meal within reach of its grasping tendrils.

IRONMAWS IN THE WORLD

Today, ironmaws can lurk in almost any locale on the Material Plane where trees grow. Although they can withstand arctic cold, they prefer temperate or tropical climes, where prey is more plentiful and where they can pose innocuously as the broadleaf trees they resemble. Although primarily a forest dweller, the ironmaw can also be found in swamps, hills, and even mountain valleys, always in the company of tall trees.

Travelers returning from the Abyss relate tales of dense stands containing dozens or even hundreds of the monsters. Ironmaws living under these conditions stay on the move almost constantly, each one trying to shuffle to the edge of the stand, the only position from which it has any real hope of capturing prey. Thus they creep across the Abyssal landscape like great, dark amoebas flowing in ever-changing shapes and occasionally splitting into smaller masses. Any creature unfortunate enough to stumble into one of these awful groves usually dies within

seconds to sudden deadly strikes by the ironmaws' tendrils. The creatures then squabble over the corpse, literally tearing it to bits as each tries to obtain a morsel of flesh for itself.

On the Material Plane, ironmaws are largely solitary, although they can be found in pairs or small stands of up to half a dozen trees. They usually gather to mate or to take advantage of a rich hunting area. Once a stand contains about six individuals, however, one or more shuffle off in search of better opportunities.

Because of its insatiable appetite and evil nature, an ironmaw is seldom a welcome addition to any sylvan neighborhood. Nearby elves who become aware of its presence quickly mount an expedition to eradicate it. Druids often react the same way, despite their live-and-let-live mindset—an ironmaw can quickly drive off or kill an area's game, thus disrupting the natural cycles of the forest. Centaurs, dryads, nymphs, and even the usually playful and carefree sprites are similarly hostile, although they often lack the magical power needed to defeat the creature. They usually keep a close watch on the ironmaw lest it approach a settlement, then either attempt to discourage it or seek help. One effective tactic is to throw a cordon around the slow-moving plant and drive off all the local animals, thus depriving the ironmaw of prey and encouraging it to move elsewhere.

Green dragons also resent the presence of such capable predators in their territories, but occasionally one forges an alliance of sorts with an ironmaw. Protected by its mobility, breath weapon, and magical power—not to mention its sheer size—the dragon can sometimes intimidate or bribe the creature into serving as a guardian for its lair. The ironmaw is content to serve so long as the dragon brings it food regularly (very few beings willingly approach a dragon's lair, and they are even less likely to do so with a voracious ironmaw around). Such arrangements seldom last long, since the dragon eventually grows tired of fetching live prey for its servant. Even if a dragon does not press an ironmaw into service, it often keeps close tabs on the creature. Ironmaws have little interest in treasure, and most dragons aren't above picking up any baubles left behind as the ravenous tree roams about the forest.

THE IRONMAW DEVELOPED ITS TASTE FOR FLESH IN THE ABYSS, WHERE SUNLIGHT IS UNRELIABLE AT BEST AND SOILS ARE NOTORIOUSLY POOR.

LIFE CYCLE

The ironmaw developed its taste for flesh in the Abyss, where sunlight is unreliable at best and soils are notoriously poor. Even when growing in a fertile zone on the Material Plane, an ironmaw craves flesh, bone, and blood for sustenance and reproduction. Although often able to survive on good soil and sun alone, it is insatiably hungry by nature and needs an extra energy boost to produce fruit and seeds.

Ironmaws produce hanging clusters of dark brown flowers that give off a stink like that of carrion. Every ironmaw has both male and female flowers and is capable of reproducing on its own, but stands often gather to cross-pollinate. An ironmaw transfers pollen from flower to flower using its tendrils. Once pollinated, the blooms develop into clusters of dark brown fruit resembling acorns, retaining their foul odor. The fruit tastes just as bad as it smells, and it is too acrid for humans to eat unless first cured in lye. Even then it tastes like rotten meat.

When cast on the ground and watered with blood, a fruit sprouts within a few weeks. An ironmaw seedling resembles an adult but is dangerous only to Fine and Diminutive creatures. A seedling can take anywhere from a few months to a few years to reach adult size, depending on how much food it gets.

NATURAL WEAPONRY

An ironmaw possesses a mighty arsenal of natural weaponry, which includes its tendrils and powerful maw.

Tendrils: An ironmaw's four thorny tendrils are formidable weapons. The creature wields them like very long whips or flails. A full-grown ironmaw's tendrils can grow to 120 feet long (1d6 x 10 + 60 feet); however, the creature can only manage attacks with lengths of tendril up to 60 feet. The excess coils remain hidden in its upper branches, allowing the ironmaw to pay out extra length when making a melee attack, should a tendril be severed. This gives it a natural reach of 60 feet.

A tendril deals an average of 17 points of damage (2d6+10) on a hit, and that alone makes it dangerous to many creatures. Its many thorns and barbs deal piercing and bludgeoning damage, and it threatens a critical hit on an attack roll of 19 or 20. However, an ironmaw's tendril delivers more than mere damage. It also digs into the flesh, becoming attached like a burr in a dog's fur. Sticky sap adheres to clothing and equipment, anchoring the tendril all the more securely. Whenever an ironmaw begins its turn with a tendril attached to an opponent, it automatically deals tendril damage and drags that creature 10 feet closer to itself, possibly drawing the opponent into its crushing maw (see below).

The moment the tendril strikes and attaches, specialized spines inject virulent spores into the opponent's bloodstream. These spores have a powerful anticoagulant effect, causing the wound to bleed profusely and dealing an additional 3 points of damage each subsequent turn. This damage occurs at the beginning of the ironmaw's turn in the initiative order and continues each round until the wounded creature dies or the wound is treated. The bleeding can be stopped only by a Heal check (DC 10) or the application of any *cure* spell or other healing magic (*heal, healing circle,* or the like). Each hit by a tendril causes another wound. The ironmaw's blows also have a sickening effect on the victim, dealing 1d6 points of Constitution damage as the ironmaw feasts on its blood. Severing a blood-filled tendril releases a gory spray of crimson from the cut. This doesn't do any extra harm to the ironmaw, but it looks impressive.

Breaking free from a tendril is difficult. To do so, the opponent must make an Escape Artist check (DC 25) or a Strength check (DC 26), or deal 13 points of damage to the tendril with a single blow from a slashing weapon

(AC 22). Use the procedure for sundering a weapon (see Chapter 8: Combat in the *Player's Handbook*) to resolve the attempt.

Maw: An ironmaw can use its namesake feature to deliver bite attacks. The creature's bite isn't nearly as formidable as its tendrils, but it deals a respectable 9 points of damage on average (1d8+5). The real danger comes when the ironmaw manages to drag a foe into bite range with a tendril. When it tries to bite a creature that has at least one tendril attached, it gets a +4 bonus on its attack roll.

If the ironmaw drags a Large or smaller foe into its own space, it attempts to engulf the creature. The foe is allowed a Reflex save (DC 15) to avoid the maw. If the save succeeds, the foe is pushed either back to where it began the turn or into any space adjacent to the ironmaw (the ironmaw chooses the space). Any tendrils attached to the foe remain attached. If it fails the save, the foe is deposited in the crushing maw, where it is forced into the ironmaw's hollow, fluid-filled trunk. The ironmaw detaches any tendrils attached to the engulfed foe.

The tree's digestive juices are too weak to cause any immediate harm to an engulfed foe, but the victim must hold its breath or begin to drown. The trunk, however, acts like an enormous gizzard, grinding up the ironmaw's food and dealing 2d6+10 points of bludgeoning damage each round to the creature within.

An ironmaw's trunk can hold one Large, two Medium, four Small, eight Tiny, sixteen Diminutive, or thirty-two Fine creatures. Creatures killed inside the trunk are completely consumed after about an hour, at which time the ironmaw expels any indigestible matter.

The ironmaw might also engulf creatures it has killed with its tendrils, storing them for several days until it can "plant" them around an ironmaw seed. About a week after planting, the seeds sprout into ironmaw saplings, which feed off the corpses planted with them and reach maturity within a month.

IRONMAWS IN COMBAT

Because it is virtually immobile, an ironmaw hunts by ambush. Despite being fairly stupid and always hungry, the creature exhibits considerable guile and patience. It first chooses a locale where prey is likely to approach: Springs, fords, game trails, salt licks, and areas of young, tender growth all attract wildlife and make prime hunting grounds for ironmaws. More daring specimens lurk near roadsides, bridges, and campsites, hoping to ambush unwary people.

An ideal spot has many broadleaf trees of about the ironmaw's height (20 to 30 feet for a mature individual) and a clear area nearby. The ironmaw hides among the trees and uses its tendrils to attack anything that enters the clear area. The edge of a woodland meadow serves its purposes well.

Given its lack of mobility, an ironmaw would seem to have few options in combat. Its incredible reach, however, gives it flexibility. It threatens everything within 60 feet and can make attacks of opportunity within that area, and it can easily attack multiple foes even when they are scattered.

ALTHOUGH IT REMAINS FAIRLY RARE, AN IRONMAW CAN TURN THE MOST IDYLLIC-LOOKING GLADE INTO A SINISTER AND DANGEROUS PLACE.

An inexperienced ironmaw lashes out whenever anything comes within range. An older, more crafty specimen usually waits until prey gets closer, usually about 40 feet away, especially when several opponents approach in a group. This ensures that the ironmaw can attack any of its foes and makes it more difficult for them to withdraw out of reach.

In either case, the ironmaw tries to attack before its opponents can spot it. If it manages to get surprise (quite likely given its excellent ability to hide among the trees) the ironmaw makes its single attack against the closest foe. This generally assures it of a clear line of sight and also forces the foe's companions (if any) to move closer if they want to help free their comrade from an attached tendril.

When an using its first full attack action against a group, an ironmaw usually lashes at three or four different foes, starting with the creatures closest to itself. Although this tactic dilutes the ironmaw's offensive power, it also blunts any countermeasures, since each opponent struck has to deal with a bleeding wound and an attached tendril. On subsequent rounds, with one or more foes so occupied, the creature uses its free tendrils against any who are still free, starting with those who are trying to assist their comrades.

If reduced to less than 25% of its original hit points, an ironmaw often switches tactics and directs all its free tendrils against the foe that has hurt it the most. This tactic works well, since the Constitution loss from multiple tendril hits can kill a single creature outright.

Whenever a foe succumbs to an ironmaw's tendril attack, its Great Cleave feat comes into play. It detaches the tendril to make another melee attack, usually against the closest foe who does not already have a tendril attached.

An ironmaw seldom tries to flee from combat, knowing that it cannot outrun anything with its land speed of 10 feet. But if it is being harried from beyond its reach by ranged weapons or spells, it has sense enough to withdraw or at least seek cover.

Ironmaw Group Tactics

When a pair or stand of ironmaws fight together, they usually do not bother to coordinate. Instead, they stand 5 to 10 feet apart in a circle with a diameter of 40 to 50 feet. The creatures usually hold their attacks until they are spotted or until opponents come within reach of at least two individuals. Once the battle commences, each ironmaw generally follows the tactics described above.

Frequently, tendrils from two or more ironmaws become attached to the same foe. When this occurs, all of them try to drag the creature toward themselves. To decide which one wins the resulting tug-of-war, first look for a space that is 10 feet closer to all the ironmaws involved. If no such space is available, find a space 10 feet closer to at least one of the competing ironmaws

and not farther away from any other. If there still is no such space, all the ironmaws make opposed Strength checks (if any individual has more than one tendril attached, it gains a +2 circumstance bonus on the check for each extra tendril). The loser must detach its tendrils, and the remaining ironmaws repeat the process until there is a legal space to move the creature or until only one ironmaw has tendrils attached to it.

IRONMAWS CAN BE DIFFICULT TO ERADICATE, BUT WITH SMART PRECAUTIONS AND CAREFUL TACTICS, A PARTY CAN DEAL WITH THEM EFFECTIVELY.

FIGHTING AN IRONMAW

Often, the best way to deal with an ironmaw is to avoid the creature.

In theory, a trained observer can easily recognize an ironmaw's territory. This is true, to an extent. When an ironmaw has remained in one place for a while, the area becomes littered with indigestible bits from its previous victims, such as scraps of fur. If the ironmaw has battled intelligent creatures, it leaves behind pieces of their equipment, particularly metal and wooden items, coins, gems, cloth, and leather, which the ironmaw either cannot digest or does not care to eat. However, all this detritus is easily overlooked among the natural litter and brush that covers most forest floors.

The Spot DC to notice telltale debris in an ironmaw's vicinity is 20. Even if successful, the check merely reveals its presence, not its significance. A Survival check (DC 15) allows the observer not only to notice the refuse but also to realize that some predatory creature has fed and left it behind. A character who successfully spots the debris can attempt a Knowledge (nature) check (DC 15) to come to the same conclusion.

Even when scanning the area upon noting the debris, a party might overlook the ironmaw's presence. They must make Spot checks opposed by the ironmaw's Hide (which is excellent within a wooded area) to actually see the creature. Even then, it resembles an oak tree distinguished only by blood-red splotches on the leaves. A druid can immediately recognize the ironmaw as an unnatural plant. A Knowledge (planes) (DC 20), Knowledge (nature) (DC 15), or bardic knowledge (DC 25) check confirms its true nature—and, of course, characters might recognize it from their own experience.

The wary might loose an arrow or other ranged attack at the odd-looking tree. This usually motivates it to strike if there is a foe within reach, even if the ranged attack misses or fails to overcome the ironmaw's damage reduction. If no foes are within reach, the creature waits a round or two, hoping someone will move in for a closer look.

Stay Back If You Can

Given an ironmaw's extremely slow speed, an obvious combat tactic is simply to stay out of reach and hurl spells and ranged attacks. However, this is easier said than done.

An ironmaw has impressive damage reduction, rendering it all but immune to ranged weapons with less than +3 magical enhancement. Since most characters focus on melee combat, sufficiently powerful ranged weapons are seldom available. A *greater magic weapon* spell can make up for this lack nicely. Even so, expect to spend a long time pumping arrows into an ironmaw before it succumbs. If you are in a thickly overgrown area, chances are the ironmaw can gain cover from the surrounding trees, making the task of bringing it down with ranged attacks even more laborious. Also keep in mind that the creature is not completely immobile. It can cover 20 feet a round with a double move, or 40 feet if it runs, requiring a minimum distance of 105 feet to be entirely safe from an ironmaw's attacks. While it is difficult to run through a forest, an open space is much easier—ironmaws lurk near clearings and meadows for a reason.

When playing cat-and-mouse with an ironmaw, keep an eye out for others lurking nearby. If you allow one ironmaw to occupy your attention, another just might creep into range unnoticed.

Going Toe to Root

Defeating an ironmaw with melee attacks usually takes much less time than a ranged assault, but it entails far more risk.

It doesn't pay to be timid in close combat with an ironmaw. Move in quickly so that it gets few chances to use its tendrils. Also, send in as many attackers as possible so that no one opponent faces all the creature's tendrils. Should the ironmaw manage to attach a tendril to a comrade, don't be in too great a hurry to free the character unless you intend to flee. Constitution damage occurs only when a tendril first hits and attaches. Breaking free only invites another tendril attack along with another bleeding wound and more Constitution damage. If a party member is snared within 15 feet of the ironmaw, however, try to sever every tendril as soon as it attaches. You don't want anyone engulfed.

Once you get close enough for melee, plan to stay there until you get the job done. Almost anyone can outrun an ironmaw, but there's no escaping those tendrils when you're within 60 feet of the monster.

Spellslinging

A typical party's ability to strike effectively at a distance usually rests with its spellcasters. However, an ironmaw's spell resistance of 30 makes it all but immune to most magical assaults, even from casters with the Spell Penetration feat. Spells that employ cold or electricity are a waste of time: Ironmaws are immune to these energy types. They are also resistant to acid and sonics, so use fire and force effects if you must cast spells against an ironmaw. It is best to stick with spells that enhance your party, such as *greater magic weapon.*

Spells that create or conjure allies, such as the various *summon monster* and *summon nature's ally* spells, and *animate objects,* get around an ironmaw's spell resistance. Such allies, however, often cannot overcome the creature's damage reduction and thus can only block or delay its movement. But sending in a first wave of summoned creatures floods the area with

more targets than the ironmaw can deal with, allowing the PCs to get within melee range without drawing tendril attacks. Most ironmaws are cagey enough to redirect their tendrils against more dangerous opponents, but this tactic might still buy combatants a little time.

Being evil and extraplanar, an ironmaw is vulnerable to banishing spells such as *dispel evil* and *holy word* (even if it grew from a seed planted on the Material Plane). These spells still have to get through its formidable spell resistance, but the battle is over if they work—and the +4 deflection bonus to AC from *dispel evil* doesn't hurt either. Comrades who have been engulfed or who have tendrils attached stay behind when the ironmaw is banished back to the Abyss. The *banishment* spell, of course, is the most effective means of sending an ironmaw packing. Items repellent to an ironmaw include: a pound or more of salt, a pound or more of silver, hairs from a celestial creature or good outsider, fire, and an axe blade. Each extra element improves your ability to overcome the ironmaw's spell resistance by +1 and also raises the spell's save DC by 2, so try to use as many as you can.

ALTERNATE STATISTICS

The statistics below represent a juvenile ironmaw. The standard monster description can be found in the *Fiend Folio.*

Ironmaw Seedling: CR 10; Large plant (Extraplanar); HD 8d8+32; hp 68; Init -1; Spd 10 ft.; AC 21, touch 9, flat-footed 21; BAB +6; Grap +16; Atk +12 melee (1d8+6 4 tendrils/crit 19-20) and +7 bite (1d6+3); Face/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft. (40-foot reach with tendrils); SA Attach, engulf, illness, tendrils, wounding; SQ Acid resistance 10, cold immunity, DR 10/+2, electricity immunity, plant traits, sonic resistance 5, SR 20; SV Fort +10, Ref +1, Will +3; Str 22, Dex 9, Con 19, Int 4, Wis 13, Cha 14.

Skills: Hide +5*, Spot +12, Listen +12; *Feats:* Alertness, Power Attack, Cleave.

Attach (Ex): If an ironmaw hits with a tendril attack, the tendril, in addition to dealing normal damage, attaches to the opponent's body. A tendril draws a stuck opponent 10 feet closer in each subsequent round (no attack of opportunity) unless the opponent breaks free, which requires an Escape Artist check (DC 21) or a Strength check (DC 21). An ironmaw can draw in a creature within 10 feet of itself and bite with a +4 attack bonus in that round. An ironmaw can draw a creature into its space and attempt to engulf it as well. A tendril can be severed by a single attack with a slashing weapon (made as an attempt to sunder a weapon) dealing at least 7 points of damage. Severing a tendril does not shorten the ironmaw's reach; it simply plays out more tendril from its trunk.

Engulf (Ex): As a standard action, an ironmaw can attempt to engulf a Large or smaller creature that enters its space. The victim of the attack can make an attack of opportunity, but if it does, it is not entitled to a saving throw. A victim that does not attempt an attack of opportunity must make a Reflex save (DC 15) or be engulfed; on a success, the victim is pushed back or aside (but not freed from attached tendrils). An engulfed creature takes 1d8+6 points of bludgeoning damage within an ironmaw's trunk each round and must hold its breath or begin to suffocate.

Illness (Ex): An ironmaw's tendrils can sap an opponent's health. Anyone caught by a tendril must succeed on a Fortitude save (DC 18) or take 1d6 points of Constitution damage.

Tendrils (Ex): An ironmaw can attack with its four tendrils from up to 40 feet away. Anyone struck by a tendril can take damage, lose blood, suffer illness, and be drawn toward the ironmaw's trunk.

Wounding (Ex): A wound resulting from an ironmaw's tendril attack bleeds for an additional 3 points of damage per round thereafter. Multiple wounds from such attacks result in cumulative bleeding loss (two wounds for 6 points of damage per round, and so on). The bleeding can be stopped only by a Heal check (DC 10) or the application of any cure spell or other healing spell (*heal, healing circle,* or the like).

Plant Traits (Ex): An ironmaw is immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and polymorphing. It is not subject to critical hits or mind-affecting effects. An ironmaw also has low-light vision.

Skills: Ironmaws receive skills as fey. An ironmaw has a +8 racial bonus on Listen and Spot checks. *In wooded areas, an ironmaw has a +15 racial bonus on Hide checks. D

The Ultimate Source
for
RPGs, CCGs, Tabletop, Board Games,
Miniatures, Dice, Paints,
Anime, Video Games and More!

All your favorites including...

MAGE KNIGHT

d20 system

and much, much more!

Get
10% off
Great games, books, & DVDs!
Offer valid until June 1, 2003
Not valid on sale/select items or game consoles
Coupon Code: 892738

Order Toll Free Today
1 (888) 499-3423
or visit us at
WWW.DOorDice.com
http://www.doordice.com

TACTICAL TERROR

Killer Creature Combos

by Skip Williams · Illustration by Kalman Andrasofszky

What's twice as bad as a monster? Two monsters! Especially if they're the *right* two. Most D&D players are quick to grasp the importance of a well-rounded party: A combat specialist, an arcane spellcaster, a divine spellcaster, and a rogue. Such a party can deal with a wide variety of foes and situations, thanks to its members' equally wide variety of capabilities.

Monsters, too can become more powerful and flexible when they're part of well-constructed groups. You don't have to build parties of monsters to create challenging encounters—often just two kinds of creatures can do the trick.

SEND IN THE CAVALRY

Fighting with a mount provides many benefits, greater speed and a height advantage (+1 bonus on melee attacks) being chief among them. Player characters with a taste for dungeon crawling tend to leave their mounts behind, but that shouldn't stop you from dropping in a mounted foe from time to time. For more information on mounted combat and monstrous mounts, check out "Saddle Up" in issue #304.

A Troll on a Bulette: Either of these creatures is dangerous by itself. In combination they're speedy, keenly alert, and capable of devastating melee attacks. Give the troll a spear, and the pair can deliver a nasty charge attack using the bulette's bite and the troll's weapon (which the troll can wield two-handed, assuming it has a decent Ride check). Once engaged, have the troll switch to claw attacks so that it has a chance to use its rend ability.

The combination of the troll's scent ability and the bulette's tremorsense makes for a highly effective sentry team. The bulette automatically locates any foe within 60 feet so long as the foe touches the ground, and the troll can detect any foe within 30 feet.

A troll and a bullette together make an EL 9 encounter.

A Succubus on a Howler: A succubus usually relies on its *greater teleport* ability for mobility, but it can make better use of its spell-like abilities when it has a howler to carry it rapidly around a battlefield. The succubus can use *charm monster* here and *suggestion* there, while still maintaining a healthy distance from the foe at all times.

Opponents who close to melee range against the succubus must also contend with the howler's bite and quill attacks. In addition, the creature's howling can lower opponents' Wisdom scores, which make them more vulnerable to the succubus's Enchantment effects. Because it is an outsider, the succubus doesn't have to worry about the effects of the howling.

A succubus and a howler together make an EL 9 encounter (based on the succubus's CR of 9).

A Yuan-Ti Abomination on a Behir: This combination boasts powerful magic and good combat abilities. Open with the yuan-ti's *aversion* ability against the party's most formidable-looking combatant (or perhaps on a rogue) coupled with a lightning blast from the behir. If the *aversion* works, the subject must either keep her distance from the yuan-ti and its snake-like mount, opening her up to more ranged attacks, or incur significant combat penalties. The behir can then attempt to bite and swallow the

front-line fighters (an effective method for taking troublesome foes out of the fight) while the yuan-ti uses its spell-like abilities or melee attacks against opposing spellcasters. The yuan-ti can avoid attacks of opportunity by using its psionics and spell-like abilities defensively (this works just like casting a spell defensively) or simply take advantage of the behir's 10-foot reach to keep out of harm's way.

Obviously, the snake-bodied abomination can't ride in an ordinary saddle, but a basketlike structure or howdah will serve. Alternatively, have it curl around a small post fastened to a harness on the behir's back.

A yuan-ti abomination and a behir together make an EL 9 encounter.

BLAST AWAY

One experience with a *fireball* or *lightning bolt* is all it takes to demonstrate the effectiveness of energy attacks that affect an area. Such effects usually require a clear field of fire, lest you harm your friends. When your companions are immune to your energy attacks, though, you don't have to worry about that. Sometimes your attacks can even help your allies.

Salamanders with a Pyrohydra: A noble salamander is a nasty foe, but average salamanders or even flamebrothers are very dangerous when backed by a pyrohydra's fiery breath. The salamanders form a battle line in front of the hydra to prevent enemy fighters from closing in to chop off its heads while the hydra happily blasts away. Should foes manage to penetrate or bypass the battle line, the salamanders can grapple opponents to hinder their attacks against the hydra, allowing it to continue breathing flame or to simply attack those grappled.

A five-headed pyro hydra and two average salamanders make an EL 8 encounter.

Skeletons with Ice Mephits: Although easily turned or even destroyed outright by clerics, a horde of skeletons can be pretty scary with an ice mephit or two behind them.

If the ice mephit opens the combat with *chill metal* against the party cleric, the cleric might be too busy dealing with the effect's ongoing damage to make a turning attempt when the skeletons attack. Meanwhile, the mephit continues to plague the party by repeatedly loosing a blast of icy particles, whose cold damage is ignored by the skeletons.

Four Medium skeletons and an ice mephit make an EL 4 encounter

Shocker Lizards with a Flesh Golem: Shocker lizards are deadly when they gather even in small numbers. A flesh golem can be a real killing machine, but its relatively low Armor Class makes it fairly easy to hurt, and fire or cold effects, such as the ubiquitous *fireball*, slow it down. But when the lizards gather around the golem and use their lethal shock, the electricity damage not only harms their foes, but also heals the golem while breaking any *slow* effect on it.

This monster combination is particularly devastating if the shocker lizards have someplace to take cover from area spells. A shallow pool of water is ideal.

Three shocker lizards and a flesh golem make an EL 8 encounter.

ADD A LITTLE MUSCLE

A horde of weak creatures can get a big boost just by adding one or two heavy hitters to their side. If the opponents try to eliminate the muscle first, the weaker monsters can last a little longer and might be able to surround the enemy or escape. If the foe instead concentrates on cleaning out the little guys, the bruisers stay in the fight longer and can deal more damage.

The Organization entries in the *Monster Manual* contain many examples of this kind of combination; it's common among the weaker humanoids.

Krenshars and a Manticore: Characters with a few adventures under their belts and a few levels to show for it are merely annoyed by krenshars' pack tactics and scare effects. They might find these assaults a little harder to shrug off, however, when there's also a manticore on hand to lob volleys of spikes at them.

The krenshars need merely press their attacks while the manticore maneuvers in flight to get clear shots with its spikes. Once its spikes are exhausted, the manticore joins the krenshars in melee, preferably flying in to flank an enemy.

Three krenshars and a manticore make an EL 6 encounter.

Boars and an Ettin: Boars can keep fighting even when mortally wounded, and this makes them well suited to guard the ettin's flanks while it bashes away at the party's front-line fighters or uses its reach to nail spellcasters in the second rank.

The boars also can enter the battle ahead of the ettin, pinning down the fighting characters while the ettin throws a few spears, maneuvers around the party's flanks, or both.

Two boars and an ettin make an EL 6 encounter.

Vampire Spawn and an Umber Hulk: Although deadly combatants in their own right, vampire spawn fare best when they can use hit-and-run tactics, striking quickly and then withdrawing to let their fast healing kick in. An umber hulk ally can limit opponents' ability to pursue and slay the retreating vampire spawn simply by attacking any foe that tries to break away from the battle.

In addition, the umber hulk's confusing gaze (a mind-affecting ability to which the vampire spawn are immune) often disrupts any organized response to the vampire spawn's attacks. It is very difficult to formulate and execute plans when allies might do nothing, attack randomly, or run off. Characters who end up fleeing are prime targets for vampire spawn that have left the main battle.

Two vampire spawn and an umber hulk make an EL 8 encounter.

ADD A LITTLE MAGIC

Few combinations are more effective than a capable spellcaster guarded by a few toughs. This is the formula most adventuring groups use for success, and it can work for monsters just as well.

Driders and Minotaurs: Although neither of these creatures is known for its diplomatic skills, driders are certainly smart enough to take advantage of brawn, and minotaurs have enough cunning to recognize the value of magical support.

In a battle, the minotaurs' usual tactic is to charge into melee, while the driders climb or *levitate* to stay out of reach and pelt enemies with offensive spells. The driders might use spells such as *bull's strength*, *endurance*, or *shield of faith* to beef up the minotaurs before combat begins. A drider with cleric spells might hang back but use spells such as *magic circle against good* and *prayer*, and of course various *cure wounds* spells, to support the minotaurs.

Five minotaurs and a drider make an EL 10 encounter.

A Spirit Naga and Trolls: With its poisonous bite, charming gaze, and arcane spells, a spirit naga can defeat many foes all by itself. When surrounded by a few troll bodyguards, it becomes even more deadly.

A HORDE OF WEAK CREATURES CAN GET A BIG BOOST JUST BY ADDING ONE OR TWO HEAVY HITTERS TO THEIR SIDE.

STEALTHY MONSTERS ARE HARDER TO DEFEAT WHEN PAIRED WITH CREATURES THAT POSE AN OBVIOUS THREAT TO THE PARTY.

The spirit naga can fortify its troll allies with spells such as *bull's strength, resist energy* (to protect against fire or acid damage), and *invisibility sphere. Haste* gives the trolls an Armor Class boost and allows extra claw attacks, increasing their chances to rend opponents.

Once the trolls are in combat, the naga can use its gaze attack or spells such as *magic missile, slow,* or *vampiric touch* against foes. Although it should avoid fire- or acid-based area spells (which negate the trolls' regeneration), spells such as *flaming sphere* offer plenty of precision when selecting targets. Even a *fireball* can roast the opposition without hurting the trolls if carefully placed, especially if the trolls use their reach to maintain some distance between themselves and enemies.

Five trolls and a spirit naga make an EL 11 encounter.

A Beholder and Stone Giants: This is a vicious combination when the monsters have a good defensive position that provides cover. The beholder's antimagic cone extends 150 feet and suppresses every magic item and spell the player characters have. Meanwhile, the stone giants throw boulders to hammer the party, with much greater effect than usual because the PCs don't benefit from magic armor and other magical defenses.

Even without an advantageous position, the beholder and its giant allies can produce a deadly hail of rocks and eye rays at a considerable distance. The farther the party is from the monsters, the more difficult it is to mount a counterattack (just don't place the monsters out of eye ray range).

Three stone giants and a beholder make an EL 14 encounter.

ADD A LITTLE STEALTH

Sneaky monsters abound in the D&D game, but their tactics seldom amount to anything more subtle than an ambush, and once the fighting starts there usually isn't much further opportunity for stealth.

Stealthy monsters are harder to defeat when paired with creatures that pose an obvious threat. While a party of adventurers deal with the visible danger, they may neglect trouble approaching from behind—or from just about anywhere else.

A Choker and Gricks: A choker's improved grab and constrict attacks are dangerous to a lone character, but most groups have little difficulty killing a solitary choker that has seized a party member. With their damage reduction, a few gricks can put up quite a fight, at least until the party's spellcasters go to work on them.

A choker lurking near a grick lair can wreak havoc with a party trying to deal with gricks. The choker need only lie low until the party's combat specialists are engaged in melee, then move in to grab a soft, juicy spellcaster. Characters breaking away from the main fight to aid their companion might well fall prey to attacks of opportunity, and the gricks can pursue and press their attack while the party is preoccupied with preventing the spellcaster's demise at the tentacles of the choker.

A choaker and two gricks make an EL 4 encoutner.

A Cloaker and a Mimic: Both of these creatures hunt by stealth and ambush, and each is clever enough to recognize the other as a useful ally.

A pair working together might attract prey by collecting oddments such as old furnishings, discarded equipment, and perhaps a smattering of loose treasure. The mimic hides amid the odds and ends while the cloaker lurks overhead. When curious adventurers arrive and begin searching through the junk (and what party won't?) the cloaker hits them with a moan effect. Nausea or fear make good choices here, making sure the mimic isn't included in the effect. A clever pair might begin each day with the cloaker using its moan until the mimic makes a successful save against the effect, rendering it immune for the rest of the day.

Once the party is aware of the cloaker and dealing with its effects, the mimic makes its presence felt by gluing itself to whatever foe is handy. Better yet, it strikes at a party member who can effectively attack the flying cloaker, such as a spellcaster or anyone with a ranged weapon. If the mimic is endangered, the character posing the greatest threat is a perfect target for the cloaker's engulf attack.

Should a single character search through the junk while comrades wait nearby, it's probably best for the mimic to attack first. When the others rush to the rescue, there will be a moan effect waiting for them.

A cloaker and a mimic make an EL 6 encounter.

A Xorn and Darkmantles: Xorns, with their ability to pass through solid stone, can give dungeon adventurers fits. How much worse is a xorn encounter, then, if it hides with a few darkmantles waiting overhead?

The xorn waits below the surface, monitoring the situation with its tremorsense. When the party enters the scene, a darkmantle can create darkness, which is often enough to create an uproar, before it and its companions descend and grapple characters. While the party's attention is focused upward, the xorn suddenly attacks from below. Several darkmantles using their darkness abilities in sequence can prevent the party from being able to see anything for quite some time, and it could be a while before anyone figures out there's a xorn involved too.

A minor xorn and one darkmantle make an EL 4 encoutner. A minor xorn and five darkmantles make an EL 6 encoutner. D

ARMED TO THE TENTACLE

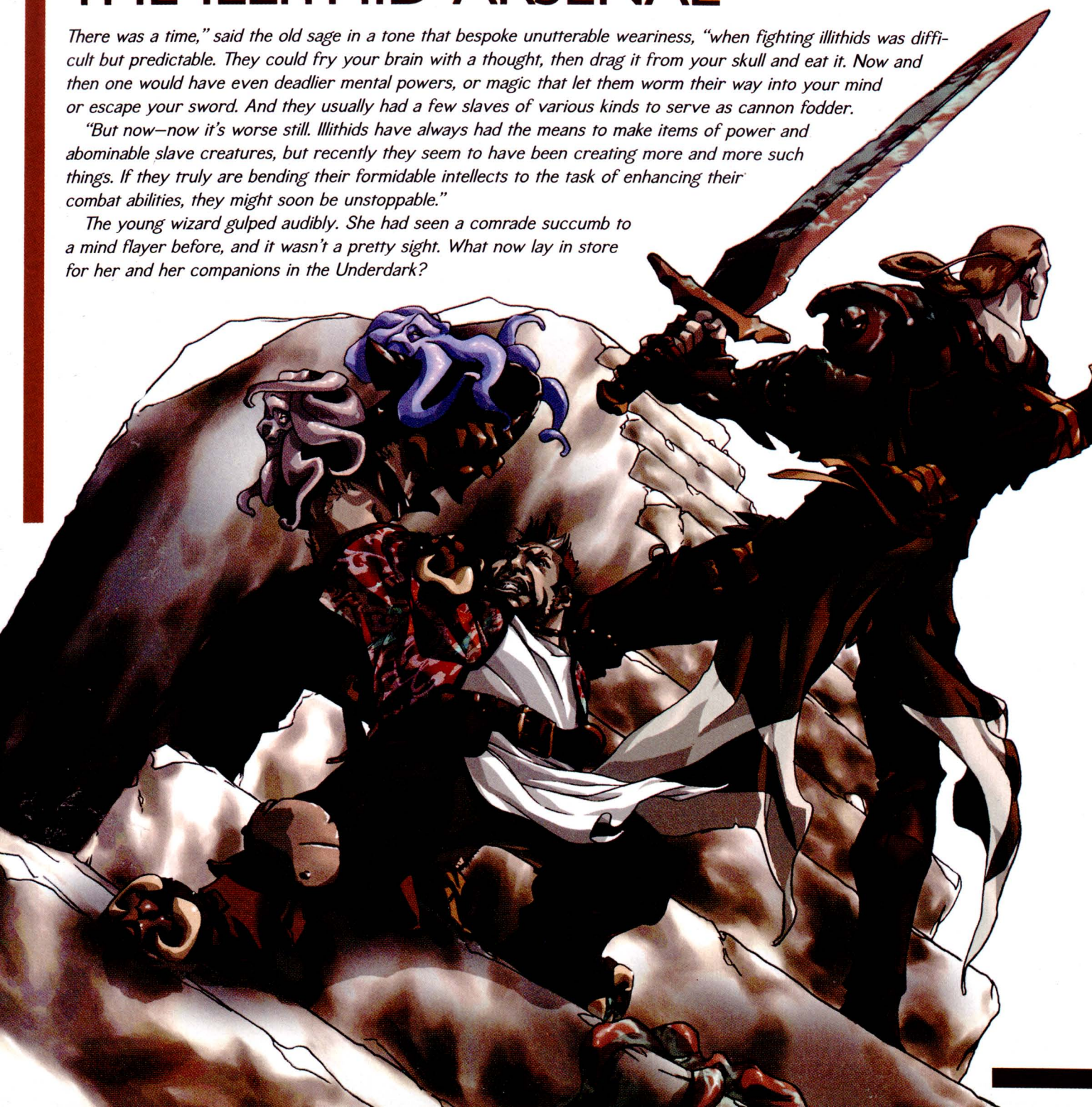
by Penny Williams · Illustrated by Kalman Andrasofszky

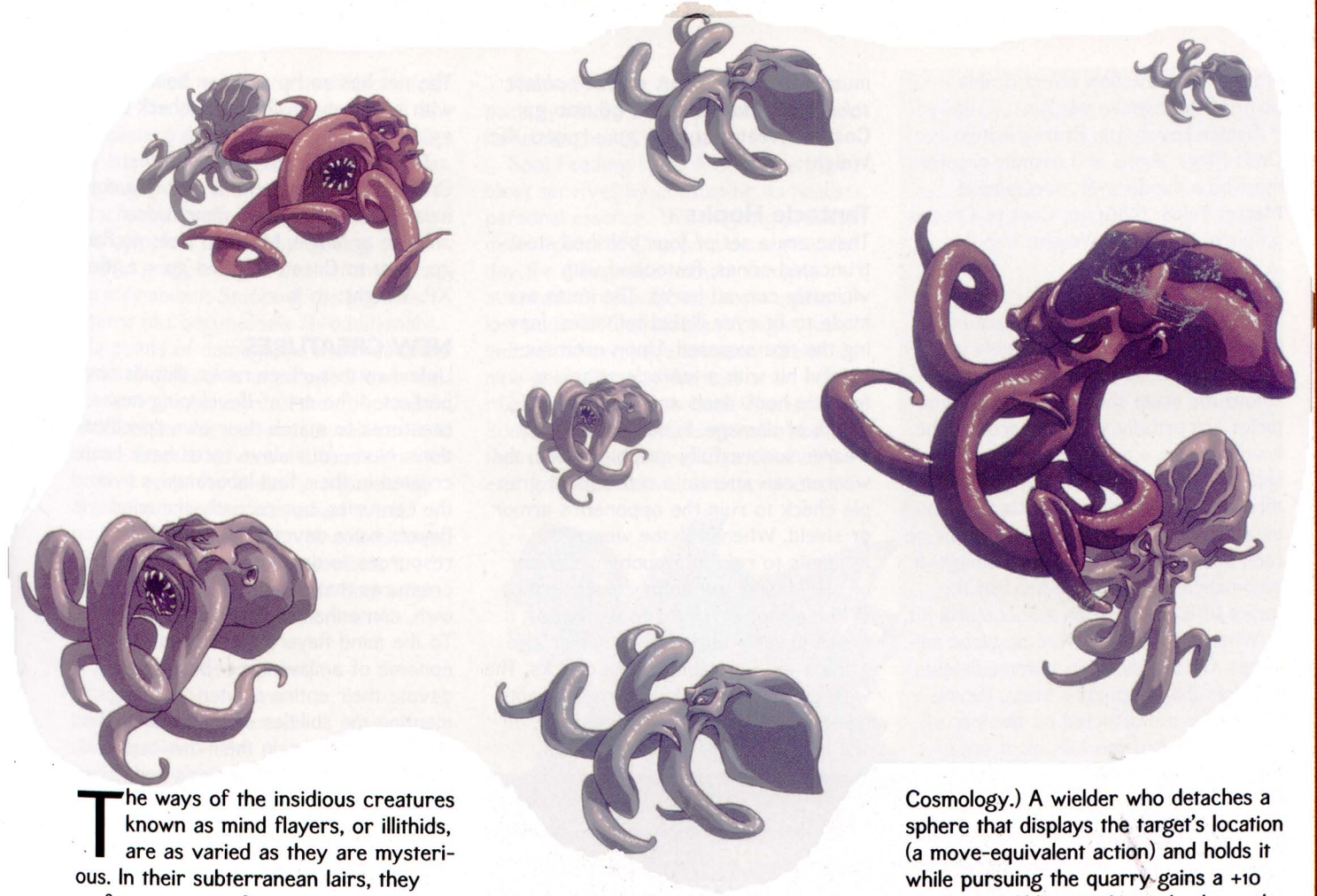
THE ILLITHID ARSENAL

There was a time," said the old sage in a tone that bespoke unutterable weariness, "when fighting illithids was difficult but predictable. They could fry your brain with a thought, then drag it from your skull and eat it. Now and then one would have even deadlier mental powers, or magic that let them worm their way into your mind or escape your sword. And they usually had a few slaves of various kinds to serve as cannon fodder.

"But now—now it's worse still. Illithids have always had the means to make items of power and abominable slave creatures, but recently they seem to have been creating more and more such things. If they truly are bending their formidable intellects to the task of enhancing their combat abilities, they might soon be unstoppable."

The young wizard gulped audibly. She had seen a comrade succumb to a mind flayer before, and it wasn't a pretty sight. What now lay in store for her and her companions in the Underdark?





The ways of the insidious creatures known as mind flayers, or illithids, are as varied as they are mysterious. In their subterranean lairs, they craft new items of power with which to subjugate other races. According to some reports, they even craft new slave races—beings created or bred to serve the illithids in specific ways. To the mind flayers, of course, such creatures are merely tools, just as magic items are tools for humanoid races. But few have ever explored the mysteries of how such living tools are made.

NEW MAGIC ITEMS

Illithid wizards and sorcerers have long experimented with creating magic items to enhance their race's ability to gain slaves and food, as well as to dominate any area where they chose to settle—be it on this plane or another. The following items are designed primarily to aid mind flayers in the pursuit of these goals, although most can be used by other creatures as well.

Dimensional Tracking Net

This *+2 net* is composed of ultrathin, shimmering fibers that seem almost too delicate to hold an opponent. It is weighted around the edges with sixteen crystalline spheres that resemble miniature *crystal balls.* Despite its delicate appearance, the net is as strong as any normal net and has the same characteristics. (See the Net entry in Chapter 7 of the *Player's Handbook* for complete details.)

A *dimensional tracking net* is made specifically for use against opponents with access to *plane shift, teleport,* and related spells or psionic powers. When it entangles a foe, the net's crystal spheres attune themselves to that creature and can be used later to track it. Once an entangled creature escapes the net or is set free, the spheres continue to display its current location for 24 hours afterward. The effect functions just as a *crystal ball.* The user immediately knows which plane the target is on. (If you are using *Manual of the Planes,* the tiny crystal spheres take on the color corresponding to the target's current plane, according to Table 5-1: Random Color Pools for the D&D Cosmology.) A wielder who detaches a sphere that displays the target's location (a move-equivalent action) and holds it while pursuing the quarry gains a +10 bonus on Wilderness Lore checks made to track the target once he or she has reached the correct plane. Up to sixteen pursuers can each use a sphere to track the target in this manner.

Should the net entangle multiple creatures at once, roll randomly to see which one the spheres attune themselves to.

Caster Level: 7th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *scrying;* **Market Price:** 64,320 gp; **Cost to Create:** 32,320 gp + 2,560 XP; **Weight:** 10 lb.

> Few members of other races are mad enough to appreciate the mind flayers' sick sense of aesthetics.

Extractor Shuriken

This Tiny *+1 shuriken* is carved from adamantine to resemble a miniature illithid head. An *extractor shuriken* automatically strikes the head of the target (assuming it has one) on a successful hit. When it strikes, the shuriken's tentacles dig into the opponent's skull and extract a piece of the

brain. The extraction effect drains 1 point of Intelligence per hit.

Caster Level: 9th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, creator must be a mind flayer, *feeblemind*; **Market Price:** 6,861 gp; **Cost to Create:** 3,611 gp + 260 XP; **Weight:** 1/10 lb.

Extractor Globe

This *+1 returning weapon* is formed from wood or stone to resemble a full-sized illithid head with a hollow space where the brain should reside. The tentacles are artfully wrapped around the head to make a roughly spherical shape, giving the object balance when thrown. An *extractor globe* is thrown as a rock, with a range increment of 30 feet, and deals 1d8 points of damage. It automatically strikes the head of the target (if it has one) on a successful hit.

When it hits, the *extractor globe* animates. On a critical hit, it immediately extracts the opponent's brain. (Some beings are not affected by the loss of their brains, but this kills most creatures instantly). Otherwise, its tentacles attempt to grab the opponent's head as a Tiny animated object with the ability to use the improved grab special attack on a creature of any size and a +20 competence bonus to grapple checks. If it gets a hold, it can extract the opponent's brain with a second successful grapple check on the following round. Upon extracting a brain, the *extractor globe* sucks it into its own hollow braincase and returns to the thrower, arriving just before his or her next turn.

Caster Level: 11th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, creator must be a mind flayer, *animate object, telekinesis;* **Market Price:** 98,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 49,000 gp + 3,920 XP; **Weight:** 5 lb.

The extractor globe was designed to allow a mind flayer to fetch its grisly meals from a great distance.

Tentacle Hooks

These are a set of four polished steel truncated cones, festooned with viciously curved barbs. The items are made to fit over illithid tentacles, leaving the tips exposed. Upon each successful hit with a tentacle attack, a tentacle hook deals an additional +1d4 points of damage. In addition, if the wearer successfully grapples a foe, the wearer can attempt a subsequent grapple check to ruin the opponent's armor or shield. Whenever the wearer attempts to ruin an opponent's armor or shield, add any enhancement bonus of the armor or shield to the opponent's grapple check. The wearer also gains a +1 bonus on grapple checks. The wearer can also make disarm attempts using tentacle attacks as though he or she had the Improved Disarm feat.

Caster Level: 5th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Expertise, Improved Disarm, creator must be a mind flayer, *shatter;* **Market Price:** 22,000 per set of four; **Cost to Create:** 11,000 gp + 880 XP; **Weight:** 2 lb.

Tentacle Net

This *+1 net* is composed of blue-black fibers that resemble the skin of an illithid. At each juncture of the weave is a minute, wriggling tentacle.

When cast at an opponent, the net's tentacles grab onto the opponent's body and hold it fast. A creature hit by a *tentacle net* takes a -4 penalty on attack rolls and a -6 penalty to effective Dexterity, and it cannot move. Any creature so entangled that attempts to cast a spell or use a spell-like ability or a psionic power must succeed on a Concentration check (DC 20) or be unable to do so. Furthermore, any foe entangled in a *tentacle net* is subject to a *dimensional anchor* effect, as the spell. The entangled creature can get free with a successful Escape Artist check (DC 25) as a full-round action. The net has 20 hp and can be burst with a successful Strength check (DC 25, also a full-round action).

Caster Level: 7th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, creator must be a mind flayer, *dimensional anchor, entangle;* **Market Price:** 59,820 gp; **Cost to Create:** 29,820 gp + 2,360 XP; **Weight:** 10 lb.

NEW CREATURES

Unknown to surface races, illithids have perfected the art of developing new creatures to match their own specifications. Numerous slave races have been created in their foul laboratories over the centuries, but recently the mind flayers have devoted most of their resources to developing symbionts: creatures that, although weak on their own, can enhance the abilities of a host. To the mind flayers, symbionts are the epitome of a slave race—beings that devote their entire existence to augmenting the abilities of their hosts. The creatures must gain their own sustenance from the mind flayer's body, though, a disadvantage the illithids have yet to surmount.

Carapace Symbionts

The creatures known as carapace symbionts are specially bred by illithids to serve as personal armor. Each forms a symbiotic attachment to its host, providing a natural armor bonus as well as one or more additional effects, depending upon the specific carapace symbiont.

Carapace symbionts have a dormant state and an active state. When not attached to a host, a carapace symbiont exists in its dormant state, resembling a clod of dirt or clay (or even an irregular sphere of metal ore) approximately 1 foot in diameter. While in this state it exhibits no signs of life, although a *detect thoughts* spell reveals a sentient mind. The creature readily identifies its specific nature and abilities to any telepathic creature that interrogates it. A dormant carapace symbiont is happy to instruct a potential host telepathically on how to join with it, although it does not mention the drawbacks to that association unless specifically asked. A carapace symbiont can exist indefinitely in its dormant state.

When held against the skin for 1 full round, a carapace symbiont begins to spread over the host's body, burrowing

SYMBIONTS

Symbionts are complete creatures that can survive at least temporarily without hosts, although their abilities blossom fully only when they join with other creatures. Their abilities are described in detail in the *Fiend Folio*, but this sidebar gives a brief summary of that information. The creatures presented here use all the rules for symbionts presented in the *Fiend Folio*. *(Continued on page 55)*

into the flesh to anchor itself at critical points. The process takes 1d4 hours to complete and is intensely painful, dealing 2d4 points of damage to the host at the beginning. The host can stop the attachment process at any time before it is complete merely by making a successful grapple check against the carapace symbiont. Stopping the process after it has begun deals an additional 2d4 points of damage, as the creature's burrowing tendrils are ripped from the host's flesh. As soon as the attachment is complete, the carapace symbiont is in active form. It covers the host's entire body, except for sensory organs and areas that the host has asked it telepathically to leave clear. In active form, the carapace symbiont resembles a hard, lumpy coating. A host may only wear one carapace symbiont at any time.

Any attempt to remove an attached carapace symbiont results in an immediate conflict. If the carapace symbiont wins, the host cannot remove it. A host that wins the conflict can peel and scrape the carapace symbiont away from its flesh. This process requires 1 hour and deals 3d6 points of damage to the host. Upon completion of the removal process, the carapace symbiont rolls into a ball and assumes its dormant form once again.

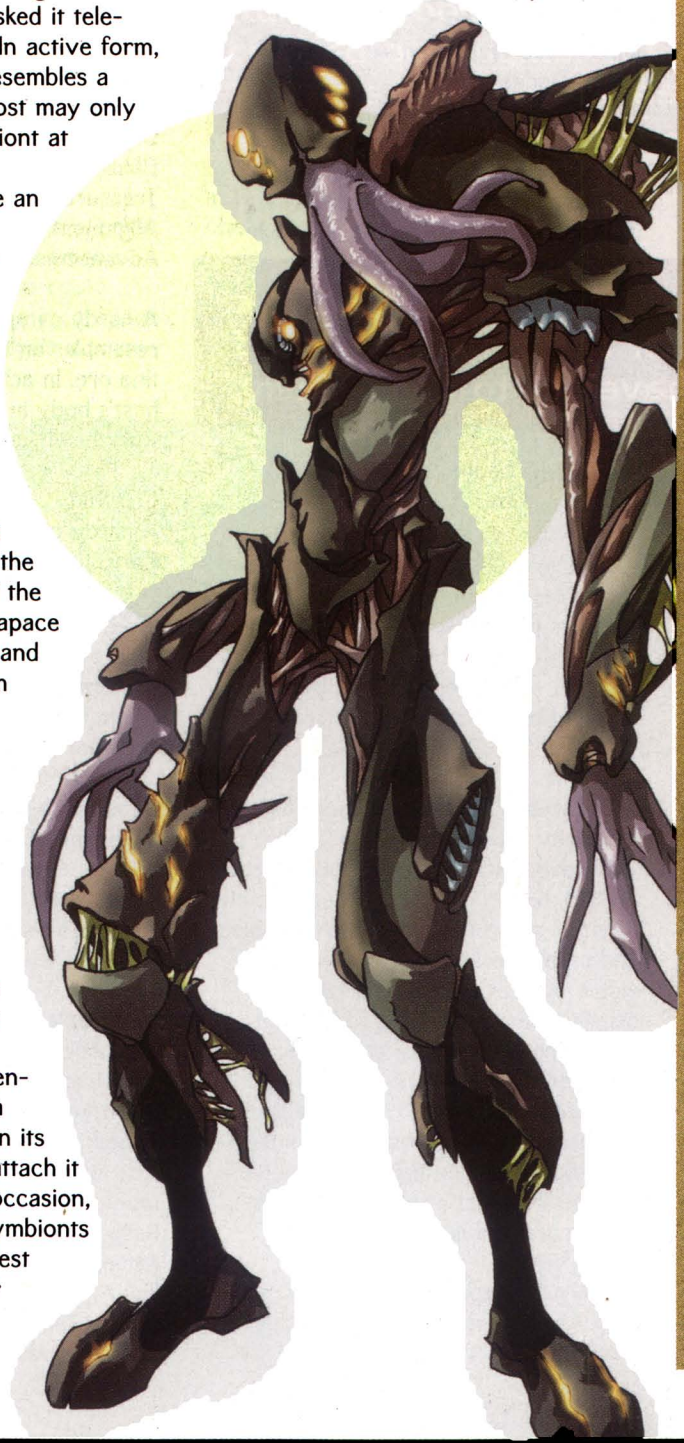
A carapace symbiont does not speak any language, but it communicates telepathically and understands Common and Undercommon.

Combat

A carapace symbiont has no way to attach itself to an unwilling host unless that host is helpless. In general, creatures seek out a carapace symbiont to gain its benefits and voluntarily attach it to their own bodies. On occasion, illithids apply carapace symbionts to helpless creatures to test the symbiont's powers or to enhance the combat abilities of slaves.

Natural Armor Bonus (Ex): A carapace symbiont increases its host's natural armor bonus by +4.

Soul Feeding (Su): A carapace symbiont survives by consuming its host's personal essence. This ongoing process deals 1 point of Charisma damage each day the carapace symbiont remains attached. Ordinarily, the host regains 1 lost point of Charisma each night, just before the carapace symbiont drains a new point, keeping the host at an equilibrium point of -1 to its base Charisma. Some carapace symbionts have abilities that damage additional Charisma with each use (see individual descriptions).



SYMBIONT TRAITS

When joined with a host, a symbiont gains a number of benefits. It acts on its host's turn each round, regardless of its own initiative modifier. It is not flat-footed unless its host is, and it is aware of any danger its host is aware of.

If a symbiont is grafted onto a visible part of the host creature's body, opponents can attack the symbiont itself instead of its host creature. This works the same way as attacking an object: The symbiont gains the benefit of the host's Dexterity modifier to AC instead of its own, and gains any deflection bonus to AC the host has as well. Its own size modifier and natural armor bonus, if any, apply. Attacking a symbiont instead of its host provokes an attack of opportunity from the host.

A symbiont never takes damage from attacks directed at the host. Like a worn magic item, a symbiont is usually unaffected by spells that damage the host, but if the host rolls a 1 on its saving throw, the symbiont is one of the "items" that can be affected by the spell (see Items Surviving after a Saving Throw in Chapter 10 of the *Player's Handbook*). A symbiont uses its host's base saving throw bonuses if they are better than its own.

Share Spells (Su): Any spell the host creature casts on itself automatically also affects the symbiont. Additionally, the host may cast a spell with a target of "You" on the symbiont instead of on itself. Likewise, a symbiont can choose to have any spell or spell-like ability it uses on itself also affect the host creature, and may cast a spell with a target of "You" on its host instead of on itself. The host and symbiont can share spells even if the spells normally do not affect creatures of the host or symbiont's type. Spells targeted on the host by another spellcaster do not affect the symbiont, and vice versa.

Personality Conflict: Symbionts can have personality conflicts with their hosts just as intelligent magic items can. When a personality conflict occurs, the host must make a Will saving throw (DC = symbiont's Ego). If the host creature succeeds, it is dominant. If the host fails, the symbiont is dominant. Dominance lasts for 1 day or until a critical situation occurs (such as a major battle, a serious threat to either the symbiont or the host, and so on—DM's discretion). Should a symbiont gain dominance, it directly controls the host creature's actions until the host regains dominance.

Strongarm Carapace

Tiny Aberration (Symbiont)
Hit Dice: 2d8+2 (11 hp)
Initiative: -3
Speed: 5 ft.
AC: 13 (+2 size, -3 Dex, +4 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 13
Base Attack/Grapple: +1/-5
Attack: —
Full Attack: —
Space/Reach: 2 1/2 ft./0 ft.
Special Attacks: —
Special Qualities: Blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft., enhance Strength, natural armor bonus, soul feeding, symbiont traits
Saves: Fort +3, Ref -3, Will +2
Abilities: Str 14, Dex 5, Con 13, Int 6, Wis 8, Cha 11, Ego 5
Skills: Hide +8, Listen +1
Feats: Great Fortitude

Environment: Any underground
Organization: Solitary (symbiont)
Challenge Rating: 1/8 or host +1
Treasure: —
Alignment: Usually lawful evil
Advancement: —

A strongarm carapace in dormant form resembles an irregular piece of iron ore. In active form, it covers the host's body in gray, lumpy material with the sheen of steel.

Combat

A strongarm carapace enhances its host's Strength score.

Blindsight (Ex): A strongarm carapace is blind, but its entire body is a primitive sensory organ that can ascertain objects and creatures by scent and vibration within 60 feet. A strongarm carapace usually does not need to make Spot or Listen checks to notice creatures within range of its blindsight.

Enhance Strength (Su): A strongarm carapace grants its host a +4 enhancement bonus to Strength. This bonus remains in effect as long as the strongarm carapace is attached.

Fastbreak Carapace

Tiny Aberration (Symbiont)
Hit Dice: 2d8+2 (11 hp)
Initiative: +2
Speed: 5 ft.
AC: 18 (+2 size, +2 Dex, +4 natural), touch 14, flat-footed 16
Base Attack/Grapple: +1/-10
Attack: —
Full Attack: —
Space/Reach: 2 1/2 ft./0 ft.
Special Attacks: —
Special Qualities: Blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft., enhance Dexterity, natural armor bonus, soul feeding, symbiont traits
Saves: Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +2
Abilities: Str 5, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 6, Wis 8, Cha 11, Ego 5
Skills: Hide +13, Listen +1
Feats: Dodge

Environment: Any underground
Organization: Solitary (symbiont)
Challenge Rating: 1/8 or host +1
Treasure: —
Alignment: Usually lawful evil
Advancement: —

A fastbreak carapace in dormant form resembles an clump of dirt shot through with bits of quicksilver. In active form, it covers the host's body in black, lumpy material with silvery streaks that seem to flow like mercury.

Combat

A fastbreak carapace enhances its host's Dexterity score.

Blindsight (Ex): A fastbreak carapace is blind, but its entire body is a primitive sensory organ that can ascertain objects and creatures by scent and vibration within 60 feet. A fastbreak carapace usually does not need to make Spot or Listen checks to notice creatures within range of its blindsight.

Enhance Dexterity (Su): A fastbreak carapace grants its host a +4 enhancement bonus to Dexterity. This bonus remains in effect as long as the fastbreak carapace is attached.

Hardy Carapace

Tiny Aberration (Symbiont)
Hit Dice: 2d8+6 (15 hp)
Initiative: -1
Speed: 5 ft.
AC: 15 (+2 size, -1 Dex, +4 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 15
Base Attack/Grapple: +1/-8
Attack: —
Full Attack: —
Space/Reach: 2 1/2 ft./0 ft.
Special Attacks: —
Special Qualities: Blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft., enhance Constitution, natural armor bonus, soul feeding, symbiont traits
Saves: Fort +3, Ref -1, Will +4
Abilities: Str 9, Dex 8, Con 17, Int 6, Wis 8, Cha 11, Ego 5
Skills: Hide +10, Listen +1
Feats: Iron Will

Environment: Any underground
Organization: Solitary (symbiont)
Challenge Rating: 1/8 or host +1
Treasure: —
Alignment: Usually lawful evil
Advancement: —

A hardy carapace in dormant form resembles an irregular piece of adamantine ore. In active form, it covers the host's body in dark blue, lumpy material with the sheen of metal.

Combat

A hardy carapace enhances its host's Constitution score.

Blindsight (Ex): A hardy carapace is blind, but its entire body is a primitive sensory organ that can ascertain objects and creatures by scent and vibration within 60 feet. A hardy carapace usually does not need to make Spot or Listen checks to notice creatures within range of its blindsight.

Enhance Constitution (Su): A hardy carapace grants its host a +4 enhancement bonus to Constitution. This bonus remains in effect as long as the hardy carapace is attached.

Slippery Carapace

Tiny Aberration (Symbiont)
Hit Dice: 2d8+4 (13 hp)
Initiative: +3
Speed: 5 ft.
AC: 19 (+2 size, +3 Dex, +4 natural), touch 15, flat-footed 16
Base Attack/Grapple: +1/-7
Attack: —
Full Attack: —
Space/Reach: 2 1/2 ft./0 ft.
Special Attacks: —

The illithids refuse to share the secrets of their symbionts and others have yet to divine them.

Special Qualities: Blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft., natural armor bonus, slick, soul feeding, symbiont traits
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +3
Abilities: Str 11, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 11, Ego 5
Skills: Escape Artist +13
Feats: Lightning Reflexes

Environment: Any underground
Organization: Solitary (symbiont)
Challenge Rating: 1/8 or host +1
Treasure: –
Alignment: Usually lawful evil
Advancement: –

A slippery carapace in dormant form resembles a lump of dark-colored clay. In active form, it covers the host's body in dark purple, lumpy material that glistens with an oily coating.

Combat

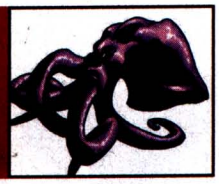
A slippery carapace's oily coating helps its host wriggle free of confinement more easily than it otherwise could.

Blindsight (Ex): A slippery carapace is blind, but its entire body is a primitive sensory organ that can ascertain objects and creatures by scent and vibration within 60 feet. A slippery carapace usually does not need to make Spot or Listen checks to notice creatures within range of its blindsight.

Slick (Ex): A slippery carapace can grant its host the benefit of the slick armor special ability. The host can activate or dismiss this ability as a free action. The effect lasts for 10 minutes or until dismissed. Each time this ability is activated, the host takes 1 point of Charisma damage.

Skills: A slippery carapace gains a +5 racial bonus on Escape Artist checks.

Rumors abound that illithids' have created new symbionts in response to some imminent invasion.



Silent Carapace

Tiny Aberration (Symbiont)
Hit Dice: 2d8+2 (11 hp)
Initiative: +3
Speed: 5 ft.
AC: 19 (+2 size, +3 Dex, +4 natural), touch 15, flat-footed 16
Base Attack/Grapple: +1/-6
Attack: –
Full Attack: –
Space/Reach: 2 1/2 ft./0 ft.
Special Attacks: –
Special Qualities: Blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft., natural armor bonus, quiet, soul feeding, symbiont traits
Saves: Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +3
Abilities: Str 13, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 11, Ego 5
Skills: Listen +2, Move Silently +13, Spot +2
Feats: Alertness

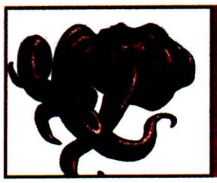
Environment: Any underground
Organization: Solitary (symbiont)

Challenge Rating: 1/8 or host +1
Treasure: –
Alignment: Usually lawful evil
Advancement: –

A silent carapace in dormant form resembles a lump of sod. In active form, it covers the host's body in black, fluffy material that appears soft and yielding.

Combat

A silent carapace's outer padding of rubbery skin and fat helps its host move more quietly than otherwise would be possible.



Illithids made symbionts in dormant form look innocuous to disguise their nature from the ignorant.

Blindsight (Ex): A silent carapace is blind, but its entire body is a primitive sensory organ that can ascertain objects and creatures by scent and vibration within 60 feet. A silent carapace usually does not need to make Spot or Listen checks to notice creatures within range of its blindsight.

Quiet (Ex): A silent carapace can grant its host the benefit of the silent moves armor special ability. The host can activate this ability as a standard action; dismissing it is a free action. The effect lasts for 10 minutes or until dismissed. Each time this ability is activated, the host takes 1 point of Charisma damage.

Skills: A silent carapace gains a +5 racial bonus on Move Silently checks.

Backwatcher Carapace

Tiny Aberration (Symbiont)
Hit Dice: 2d8+2 (11 hp)
Initiative: +4
Speed: 5 ft.
AC: 20 (+2 size, +4 Dex, +4 natural), touch 16, flat-footed 20
Base Attack/Grapple: +1/-8
Attack: –
Full Attack: –
Space/Reach: 2 1/2 ft./0 ft.
Special Attacks: –
Special Qualities: All-around vision, darkvision 60 ft., natural armor bonus, preferential dodge, soul feeding, symbiont traits, true seeing, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC)
Saves: Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +3
Abilities: Str 9, Dex 18, Con 13, Int 16, Wis 10, Cha 13, Ego 11
Skills: Balance +6, Escape Artist +9, Hide +17, Jump +1, Listen +7, Search +7, Spot +11, Tumble +9
Feats: Alertness, Dodge

Environment: Any underground
Organization: Solitary (symbiont)
Challenge Rating: 1/8 or host +2
Treasure: –
Alignment: Usually lawful evil
Advancement: –

A backwatcher carapace in dormant form resembles a lump of sod speckled with tiny shimmering stones. In active form, it covers the host's body in lumpy purple material sprinkled liberally with tiny gemlike eyes.

Illithids bred these creatures specifically to protect them from enemies with access to *dimension door* and other planar travel capabilities, such as githyanki, to minimize the damage from surprise attacks.

Combat

A backwatcher carapace's extra eyes identify the host's enemies and offer aid in dodging their attacks. They also allow the host to be more aware of its surroundings.

All-Around Vision (Ex): A backwatcher carapace can see in all directions at once. Because of this ability, it gains a +4 racial bonus on Search and Spot checks, and it cannot be flanked. It grants these same benefits to its host.

Preferential Dodge (Ex): Whenever an opponent successfully hits the host in battle, the backwatcher carapace takes note of the specific creature that struck the blow. Thereafter, it grants the host the benefit of the Dodge feat against that opponent for the next 24 hours. A backwatcher carapace can identify and defend against up to four different opponents simultaneously. The host can extend this protection against up to four enemies so identified for an additional 24 hours as a standard action. Each time the protection is so extended, the host takes 1 point of Charisma damage per enemy specified.

True Seeing (Su): A backwatcher carapace is continuously under the influence of a *true seeing* effect, as the spell (divine version). It does not grant this benefit to its host.

Uncanny Dodge (Ex): A backwatcher carapace retains its Dexterity bonus to AC even if caught flat-footed or struck by an invisible attacker. (It still loses its Dexterity bonus to AC if immobilized.) It grants this same benefit to its host.

Other Symbionts

Illithids create and use many kinds of symbionts. They are particularly fond of symbionts that mimic their own abilities. Some of these symbionts are made for the illithids slaves, and others have effects that make the mind flayers' foe fear to use them. Symbionts that unnerve other creatures are highly prized for the fear they invoke in the illithids' foes.

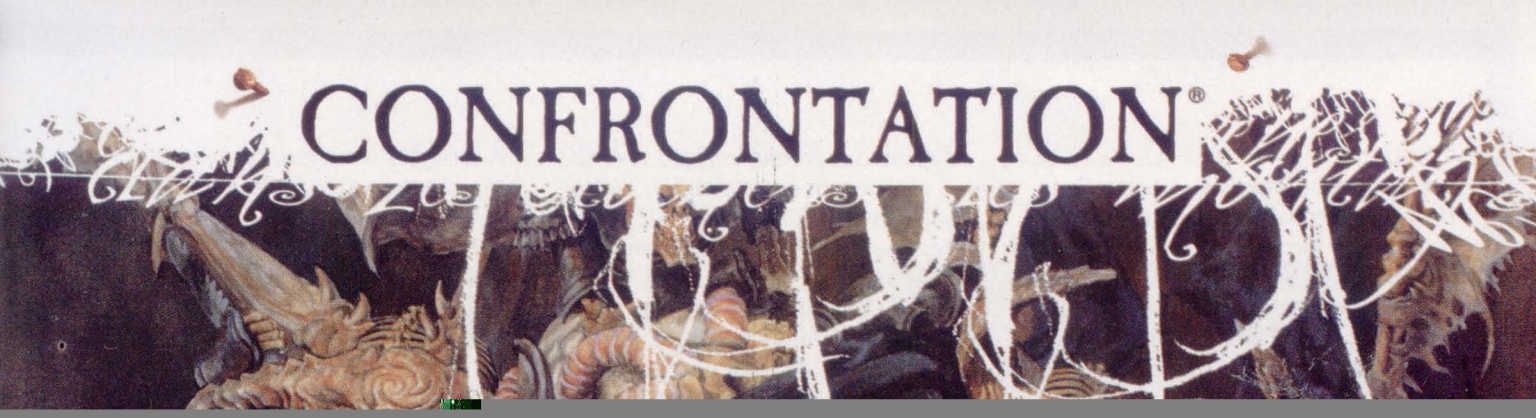
Mnemonicus

Tiny Aberration (Symbiont)
Hit Dice: 1d8 (4 hp)
Initiative: +2
Speed: 5 ft.
AC: 16 (+2 size, +2 Dex, +2 natural), touch 14, flat-footed 14
Base Attack/Grapple: +0/-13
Attack: Slam +4 melee (1d2-5)
Full Attack: Slam +4 melee (1d2-5)
Space/Reach: 2 1/2 ft./0 ft.
Special Attacks: Brain consumption, invade, spells
Special Qualities: Blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft., recall, symbiont traits
Saves: Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +4
Abilities: Str 1, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 18, Wis 15, Cha 16, Ego 19
Skills: Concentration +4, Hide +14, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (the planes) +8, Knowledge (religion) +8, Spellcraft +8
Feats: Silent Spell, Weapon Finesse

Environment: Any underground
Organization: Solitary (symbiont)
Challenge Rating: 3 or host +4
Treasure: –
Alignment: Usually lawful evil
Advancement: –

A mnemonicus is a disgusting monstrosity that resembles a black mass of wriggling tentacles.

A mnemonicus speaks Common, Draconic, Infernal, and Undercommon.


CONFRONTATION®

Combat

A mnemonicus attacks by leaping up to slam the potential host's head, wriggling its tentacles through any available orifice (ear, nose, mouth, or the like), and then attaching itself to the back of its host's head. It consumes enough of the host's brain matter to give its tentacles room for firm purchase.

Blindsight (Ex): A mnemonicus is blind, but its entire body is a primitive sensory organ that can ascertain objects and creatures by scent and vibration within 60 feet. A mnemonicus usually does not need to make Spot or Listen checks to notice creatures within range of its blindsight.

Brain Consumption (Ex): When the mnemonicus first embeds its tentacles in a host creature's brain, it ingests some of the host's brain. The host must make a successful Will save (DC 13) or take 1d6 points of permanent Intelligence drain and behave as though under the influence of a *confusion* spell (caster level 7th) for 1 hour. (The host may waive the saving throw to gain the benefits of symbiosis with the creature if desired.) The drained Intelligence cannot be replaced by any means as long as the mnemonicus is in residence. However, the creature then replaces the lost Intelligence with some of its own, resulting in no net loss to the host. The mnemonicus can be slain after taking up residence only with a *heal* spell. Should the mnemonicus die or otherwise detach from the host, however, the replacement Intelligence is gone and the host again takes the effects of the initial loss.

Improved Grab (Ex): If a mnemonicus hits an opponent of any size, with a slam attack, it deals normal damage and attempts to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity (grapple bonus +7). If it gets a hold, it can attempt to invade the target creature (see below).

Invade (Ex): If a mnemonicus successfully grapples a foe, it can use a subsequent grapple check (usually during its action on the following round) to try to embed its tentacles deep in its opponent's brain. The mnemonicus and the grappled opponent make opposed grapple checks. If the mnemonicus succeeds, it can immediately use its brain consumption special attack.

Spells: A mnemonicus can cast spells as a 3rd-level sorcerer.

Typical Spells Known (6/6; save DC 13 + spell level): 0—*acid splash, detect magic, ray of frost, read magic, resistance;* 1st—*expeditious retreat, magic missile, shield.*

Recall (Su): The mnemonicus allows the host to instantly recall up to nine levels of spells already cast or regain 18 psionic power points already used. The host can recall any desired spells cast so long as their spell levels add up to nine or less. These spells need not all be recalled at once. For example, a wizard host who had prepared one *fireball* spell for the day could recall and recast that spell three times in succession, or she could recall *fireball* once, *dispel magic* once, and *sleep* three times, or she could recall *meteor swarm* once. Each day that the recall ability is used, the host takes 2 points of Intelligence damage, regardless of how many spell levels are recalled or power points regained.

Wriggler

Tiny Aberration (Symbiont)
Hit Dice: 1d8+1 (5 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 5 ft.
AC: 11 (+2 size, -3 Dex, +2 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 11
Base Attack/Grapple: +0/-6
Attack: Bite +4 melee (1d4+3)
Full Attack: Bite +4 melee (1d4+3)
Space/Reach: 2 1/2 ft./0 ft.
Special Attacks: Attach
Special Qualities: Blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft., improved grab, reach, soul feeding, symbiont traits, tentacle attack
Saves: Fort +1, Ref -3, Will +2
Abilities: Str 14, Dex 5, Con 13, Int 4, Wis 10, Cha 11, Ego 8
Skills: Jump +6
Feats: Improved Initiative

Environment: Any underground
Organization: Solitary (symbiont)
Challenge Rating: 1/4 or host +1
Treasure: —
Alignment: Usually lawful evil
Advancement: —

A wriggler is a slimy, purple, worm-like creature that looks like a mind flayer's tentacle.

Mind flayers breed these revolting creatures to enhance their own ability to extract brains. Occasionally, they attach wrigglers to other creatures as well.

Wrigglers speak Common and Undercommon.

The mind flayers fear the coming of ancient foes, and what the illithids fear is cause for human terror.

Combat

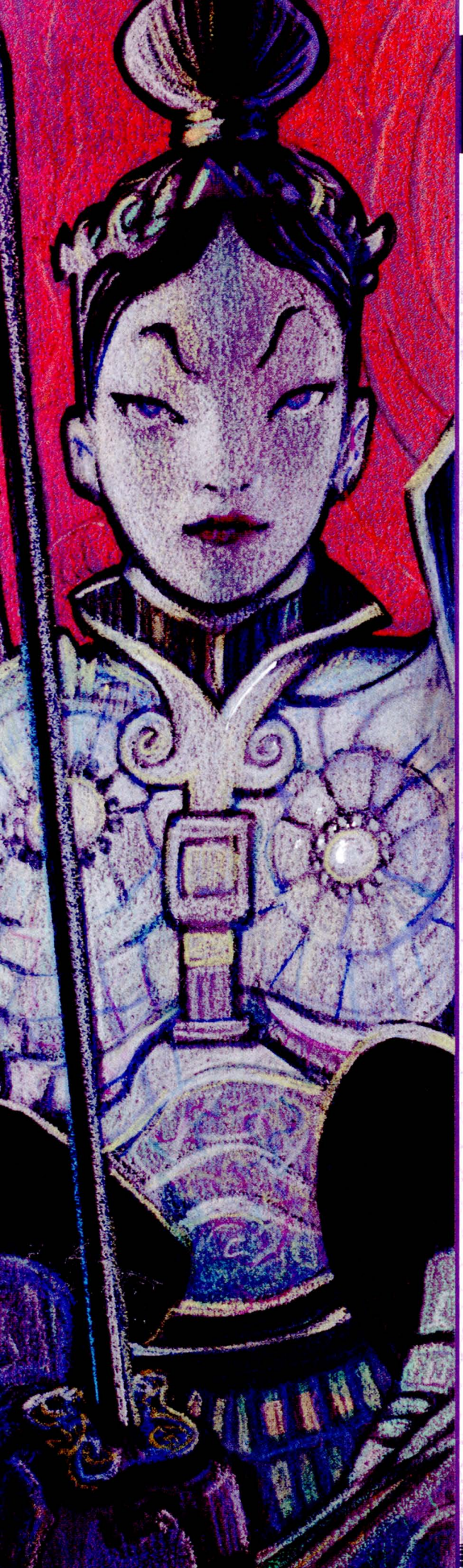
A wriggler seeks to attach itself to the host's face.

Attach (Ex): If a wriggler hits with its bite attack, it burrows into the target's face and takes up residence above its mouth (if it has one; otherwise, a central location on the head). It then extrudes four 3-foot-long tentacles that resemble those of a mind flayer over a period of 1 hour.

Blindsight (Ex): A wriggler is blind, but its entire body is a primitive sensory organ that can ascertain objects and creatures by scent and vibration within 60 feet. A wriggler usually does not need to make Spot or Listen checks to notice creatures within range of its blindsight.

Soul Feeding (Su): A wriggler survives by consuming its host's personal essence. This ongoing process deals 1 point of Charisma damage each day the wriggler remains attached. Ordinarily, the host regains 1 lost point of Charisma each night, just before the wriggler drains a new point, keeping the host at an equilibrium point of -1 to its base Charisma.

Tentacle Attack (Ex): The host gains four tentacle attacks. If the host has no other primary natural attacks, or its other primary attacks are also tentacles, these attacks are primary; otherwise the tentacles function as secondary natural weapons. The base damage for each tentacle attack is 1d4 points.



PSYCHIC BOXING

Psions of the Orient

by E. W. Morton · Illustrated by Derek Thompson

While a psion or a psychic warrior can find a home in any campaign, the setting of the *Oriental Adventures* supplement does not require an argument for the inclusion of characters with psionic powers. Instead, you might wonder how you could ever play without them.

PSION

Psions, frequently referred to as yogi, value practice and insight more than anything.

Adventures: Many yogi seek little more than experience in their travels. While they can collect treasure and acquire other worldly goods, they view such things as mere tools that serve a purpose, not a purpose in and of themselves.

Alignment: A psion may be of any alignment. While good-aligned individuals are more likely to value enlightenment over material possessions, there are more than enough evil psions to go around. The psion's goal of escaping the bounds of physical reality is ultimately devoid of moral or ethical considerations. A heartless soul who tests his progress by wreaking havoc upon the land is no less likely a candidate for success than the quiet mystic who stops only to help a fellow traveler along the way.

Background: Many psions do not realize their affinity for yogi mysticism until well into adulthood, leaving ample time to have experienced some other lifestyle before stepping onto this path. Some were common criminals, retired soldiers, or even royalty. Others led less remarkable lives. All share the common theme of abandoning a past existence. From the psion's perspective, nothing that transpired before becoming a yogi is of consequence. Psions thus feel a sense of fellowship, if not friendship, toward one another.

Races: Humans are the largest group among the psion population, but any race that appreciates serenity and patience is likely to sport at least a few yogi. There is nothing exclusively human about a life of contemplation and a quest to escape the limits of one's mortal frame.

Other Classes: While their goals are strictly personal, psions recognize that they are not able to accomplish all things without assistance. They have yet to transcend the limits of the physical world, after all. Psions cooperate well with others, though this attitude is often strictly utilitarian.

Game Rule Information: As described in the *Psionics Handbook,* except as noted below.

Paths of Enlightenment: A psion must choose one primary discipline at character creation. In *Oriental Adventures*, this choice corresponds to a path of enlightenment. Paths of enlightenment are similar to martial arts styles in that mastery confers special benefits. See Psion Paths of Enlightenment below for details.

PSION PATHS OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Paths of enlightenment are like martial arts styles for psions, except that they are tied to mental feats and abilities instead of combat styles. Psions who meet the appropriate prerequisites master a path of enlightenment, just as a martial artist masters a martial arts style. Each path of enlightenment described below corresponds to a different primary psionic discipline.

Feats marked with an asterisk (*) are psionic feats described in the *Psionics Handbook*.

Infinite Harmony Mastery

The path of Infinite Harmony teaches that enlightenment comes not in distancing oneself from the world, but in realizing the seamlessness and synergy of all things. Only through complete assimilation into the world can one find a way to escape its limitations. The psion who studies Infinite Harmony must learn to become so immersed and to gain insight from all earthly things.

Prerequisites: Clairsentience as primary discipline, Alertness, Craft Crystal Capacitor*, Encode Stone*, Master Dorje*.

Benefit: Whenever you use the *inkling* talent, your base chance of receiving a meaningful result is 50% + 1% per psion class level.

One Mind with Many Voices Mastery

The path of One Mind with Many Voices advocates the existence of a collective unconscious that binds all sentient beings together and that is the source of all thoughts and desires. To achieve enlightenment, one must join with the primordial overmind, surrendering one's own thoughts while simultaneously adopting those of all thinking creatures. Only by understanding the thoughts of others is it possible to achieve mastery of the self and mastery of psionic abilities.

Prerequisites: Telepathy as primary discipline, Improved Psicrystal*, Mind Trap*, Psychic Bastion*, Psychic Inquisitor*, Psychoanalyst*.

Benefit: You are able to mask your aura in that of another creature or object. You gain the psionic, spell-like ability to use *misdirection* once per day, as the spell from a caster whose level is equal to your psion level.

The Return to Center Mastery

The path of the Return to Center teaches that there is no difference between one point in time or space and the next. The passage of time, the existence of distance between two things, and all such similar perceptions are merely illusions that impose limits upon the untrained consciousness. Followers of this path learn that one's destination is no farther away than one's will to reach it. Only when one can traverse all there is with but a single thought can one be truly enlightened, and this can be achieved only through the mastery of time and space.

Prerequisites: Psychoportation as primary discipline, Delay Power*, Enlarge Power*, Extend Power*, Persistent Power*, Quicken Power*.

Benefit: When using any Teleportation power, the weight of objects and willing creatures that you can affect in addition to yourself is increased by 50%.

The Sign of One Mastery

Especially popular in extraplanar locales, the path of the Sign of One teaches that the world is little more than an illusion in the mind of the observer. A true believer in this philosophy holds that nothing external—not even one's dearest friend and comrade—truly exists. All of being is but a figment of the imagination; the difference between desire and the creation of reality is measured by force of will alone.

Prerequisites: Metacreation as primary discipline, Iron Will, Metacreative*, three or more psionic item creation feats.

Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus on saving throws made to disbelieve illusions.

A Thousand Pins and Needles Mastery

Raw energy is the basis of all things. Every creature, every landscape, every thought was forged long ago in basic elemental energies. To escape the bounds of the world, one must understand this tapestry of strange and powerful energies and learn to become a vessel for their proper flow. This is the path of a Thousand Pins and Needles, so named for the sensation some psions experience while manifesting powers that manipulate forces and raw energy.

Prerequisites: Psychokinesis as primary discipline, Endurance, Great Fortitude, Heighten Power*, Maximize Power*, Twin Power*.

Benefit: Having become accustomed to channeling various forms of energy through your body, you gain either electricity, fire, or sonic resistance 5. Once you have met the prerequisites for the style, you chose one resistance from the list. The choice cannot be changed, nor can mastery of this path ever provide more than one resistance.

Uniting Opposing Forces Mastery

Many paths of enlightenment encourage mind over matter: The body is something to be escaped or transcended on the path to enlightenment. Students of the Uniting Opposing Forces path hold that the opposite is true. Only by understanding the connection between mind and body, and by achieving perfect balance between the two, can true enlightenment be found. Those who follow this path spend long hours conditioning their bodies and learning how the mind can affect the physical frame.

Prerequisites: Psychometabolism as primary discipline, Body Fuel*, Inner Strength*, Psionic Body*, Psionic Metabolism*, Rapid Metabolism*, Talented*.

RAW ENERGY IS THE BASIS OF ALL THINGS.

EXPANDED MARTIAL ARTS FEATS

This replaces the list of martial arts forms in Table 6-1: Martial Arts Feats in the *Oriental Adventures* supplement. Feats marked with an asterisk (*) are psionic feats described in the *Psionics Handbook*. Feats marked with a dagger (†) are martial arts feats described in the *Oriental Adventures* supplement.

Hard Form: Power Attack

Kick Method: Flying Kick†, Roundabout Kick†

Strike Method: Eagle Claw Attack†, Fists of Iron†, Power Touch*, Psionic Fist*

Hard/Soft Form

Lock Method: Choke Hold†, Earth's Embrace†, Grappling Block†, Improved Grapple†, Stand Still*

Soft Form: Expertise

Movement Method: Dodge, Mental Leap*, Mobility, Prone Attack†, Psionic Charge*, Psionic Dodge*, Speed of Thought*, Superior Expertise†, Up The Walls*

Throw Method: Improved Trip, Defensive Throw†, Great Throw†

Vital Area Method: Falling Star Strike†, Freezing the Lifeblood†, Pain Touch†, Stunning Fist, Unavoidable Strike*

Push Method: Inertial Armor*, Unbalancing Strike†

Mental Training

Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Great *Ki* Shout†, Inner Strength*, Iron Will, *Ki* Shout†, Remain Conscious†

Benefit: Once per day you can use your total Will saving throw modifier in place of either your Fortitude or Reflex modifier for a saving throw.

PSYCHIC WARRIOR

Unlike monastic martial artists, psychic warriors view their combat skills as a means rather than an end.

Adventures: Psychic warriors rarely adventure just to test themselves. Most instead adopt a personal mission that ultimately necessitates adventuring. The quest to further a particular alignment is common, especially when that alignment promotes personal freedoms, although glory, justice, vengeance, or the pursuit of enlightenment are also popular motivations for psychic warriors.

Background: Most psychic warriors come of age in a counterculture that exists beneath the surface of normal society, one established by society's outcasts: criminals, demobilized soldiers, landless peasants, and other such vagrants. Given their rootless nature, psychic warriors show indifference to the rules of legitimate authority. Few develop their talents in mainstream institutions, such as monasteries and armies. Instead, they train clandestinely in secret societies, unsanctioned militias, and mercenary companies, or they apprentice with vagabond martial arts masters.

Races: Nonhumans are frequently outcasts in human society, a background common to psychic warriors. On the other hand, those of races not known for self-discipline are unlikely to devote themselves to such rigorous training when other, easier options are available. As in any other case, humans are the most common race.

Other Classes: Despite their tendency toward individualism, psychic warriors recognize the interdependence between the classes and generally work well in groups. Survival in the underworld from which many hail depends upon the ability to cooperate, regardless of one's thoughts on personal freedom. Psychic warriors judge the worth of others by individual merit, not by station or class.

Game Rule Information: As described in the *Psionics Handbook*, except as noted below.

Martial Arts: Psychic warriors in *Oriental Adventures* must select bonus martial arts feats instead of bonus fighter or psionic feats. However, several psionic feats also qualify as martial arts feats. See the Expanded Martial Arts Feats sidebar for a detailed list.

Specialist Psychic Warriors: Upon first taking a psychic warrior level, a character may specialize in a psychic warrior martial arts style: Commanding Voice, Iron Robe, No Wasted Motion, Palm Power, Responsive Body, and Shadow's Embrace. Each of these special styles has its own list of powers (see below) instead of the standard list of psychic warrior powers in the *Psionics Handbook*. Specialist psychic warriors gain mastery in their chosen martial art by selecting the appropriate feats. See Specialist Psychic Warrior Martial Arts Styles below for details.

A specialist psychic warrior is like a specialist wizard. The character chooses if and how to specialize at 1st level. This specialization cannot be changed later, and a specialist psychic warrior cannot multiclass into a second psychic warrior class with a different specialization.

Specialist Psychic Warrior Martial Arts Styles

The following martial arts styles are available only to specialist psychic warriors, as each requires martial arts style specialization to qualify for mastery. Each martial arts style described below corresponds to a different psychic warrior power list.

Feats and skills marked with an asterisk (*) are described in the *Psionics Handbook*. Feats marked with a dagger (†) are martial arts feats described in the *Oriental Adventures* supplement.

Commanding Voice Mastery

Unlike most martial arts, the Commanding Voice style has little to do with physical combat. Rather, it is the practice of clouding an opponent's mind with potent, hypnotic suggestions. Practitioners learn to create mystical tones with their voices that can manipulate the minds of listeners. Such tones can soothe, coerce, and even destroy.

Prerequisites: Commanding Voice specialization, Great *Ki* Shout†, Inner Strength*, Iron Will, *Ki* Shout†, base attack bonus +9 or higher, 5 ranks in Autohypnosis*.

Benefit: You gain a +2 insight bonus to Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, and Sense Motive checks.

Commanding Voice Style Power List

Psychic warriors specializing in the Commanding Voice martial arts style select their powers from the following list.

0-Level—*daze, detect psionics, distract, missive, telepathic projection, valor.*

1st Level—*attraction, charm person, demoralize, disable, empathy, lesser mindlink.*

2nd Level—*aversion, brain lock, detect thoughts, inflict pain, intrusive sense link, suggestion.*

3rd Level—*charm monster, crisis of breath, false sensory input, lesser domination, mindlink, schism.*

4th Level—*domination, fatal attraction, forced mindlink, mindwipe, tailor memory.*

5th Level—*greater domination, mind probe, psychic vampire, sending.*

6th Level—*aura alteration, mass suggestion, mind switch, trace teleport.*

Iron Robe Mastery

In contrast to the Commanding Voice style, the Iron Robe technique is intensely physical. Those who study this style harden their bodies into seemingly impossible states, developing a preternatural ability to take punishment and to shrug off damage. To an Iron Robe student, the path to victory leads straight through an opponent's incoming attacks: Many land, but few have lasting effect.

Prerequisites: Iron Robe specialization, Fists of Iron†, Improved Unarmed Strike, Inertial Armor*, Iron Will, Remain Conscious†, Toughness, 12 ranks each in Autohypnosis and Stabilize Self.

Benefit: Your natural armor bonus improves by +1.

Iron Robe Style Power List

Psychic warriors specializing in the Iron Robe martial arts style select their powers from the following list.

0-Level—*catfall, lesser natural armor, talons, valor, verve.*

1st Level—*biofeedback, combat precognition, hammer, lesser body adjustment, steadfast gaze, vigor.*

2nd Level—*body adjustment, claws of the bear, combat prescience, expansion, painful touch, sustenance.*

3rd Level—*danger sense, displacement, duodimensional hand, improved biofeedback, rejuvenation.*

4th Level—*fate of one, immovability, natural armor, psychofeedback, steadfast perception.*

5th Level—*adamant grasp, adapt body, ectoplasmic armor, energy barrier.*

6th Level—*ablating, improved vigor, shield of prudence, suspend life.*

No Wasted Motion Mastery

The goal of martial arts is to achieve perfect harmony with one's surroundings and perfect efficiency in one's reactions. To a student of the No Wasted Motion style, combat is decided long before the first attack is made. A warrior requires the presence of mind to see everything that happens around her, to use that knowledge to anticipate the immediate future, and to execute a flawless response with as little movement as possible.

Prerequisites: No Wasted Motion specialization, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Psionic Dodge*, Speed of Thought*, base attack bonus +2 or higher.

Benefit: On your turn, you may take an extra move-equivalent action. You may use this ability a number of times per day equal to your Wisdom bonus, but you may only use it once in any one round.

No Wasted Motion Style Power List

Psychic warriors specializing in the No Wasted Motion martial arts style select their powers from the following list.

0-Level—*detect psionics, elfsight, inkling, know direction, valor, verve.*

1st Level—*combat precognition, destiny dissonance, know location, expanded vision, feel light, feel sound.*

2nd Level—*augury, clairaudience/clairvoyance, combat prescience, darkvision, see invisibility, vigilance.*

3rd Level—*danger sense, invisibility purge, prowess, remote viewing, ubiquitous vision, undead sense.*

4th Level—*anchored navigation, aura sight, detect remote viewing, divination, fate of one.*

5th Level—*adapt body, energy barrier, sense psionics, true seeing.*

6th Level—*precognition, improved anchored navigation, shield of prudence, trace teleport.*

Palm Power Mastery

Some tales describe mighty warriors who throw bolts of lightning and balls of fire. They generate these attacks by channeling their *ki*, their personal energy. These are the students of the Palm Power style, and they are more common than might be expected. They couple potent unarmed strikes with the ability to wield raw energy against their foes.

Prerequisites: Palm Power specialization, Falling Star Strike†, Improved Unarmed Strike, Pain Touch†, Power Touch*, Psionic Fist*, Stunning Fist, Unavoidable Strike*, base attack bonus +4 or higher.

Benefit: You can infuse your unarmed attacks with *ki*, and each attack that you designate bypasses damage reduction as if it were a

CULTURE WITH CLASS

Oriental Adventures discusses adapting standard D&D classes for settings based on an Asian fantasy theme, but several base classes go unmentioned, and several new classes are presented only in the context of Asian-style fantasy. The book offers more of a starting point than a definitive guide to adapting classes to various settings.

Any setting has standard classes that represent the most common heroic archetypes found in that culture, but these need not be the only classes available. Almost any class—including psionic classes—can be adapted to fit into a setting based upon a particular culture.

One easy way to adapt a class based on one culture to a setting based on another is to use a setting-specific synonym: Call the class whatever your character would. King Arthur, the human samurai, in his culture of origin is called a "knight," so his player records his samurai levels as "knight" levels. Hoshi the bard refers to herself as a "geisha," and her player records her bard levels as "geisha" levels. King Arthur still uses all of the rules for the samurai class, counts as a samurai in all respects, and cannot multiclass into the samurai class, since being a "knight" already makes him a samurai. Hoshi still uses all of the rules for the bard class, counts as a bard in all respects, and cannot multiclass into the bard class, since being a "geisha" already makes her a bard.

Another approach is to use setting-neutral synonyms for class names. Doing so also establishes how given classes relate to one another. Despite their differences, both the paladin and the sohei could be referred to as "holy warriors." A paladin in a setting where sohei fill the "holy warrior" role might be seen as simply a variant sohei. Even radically different classes might be able to serve in similar roles. Perhaps shugenja are just variant clerics devoted to elemental gods, or druids are shamans who revere the collective spirits of the natural world. In this approach, the class in question is simply regarded as a subcategory of another and treated by society much as is the encompassing class.

Changing the name of individual weapons, spells, feats, and class abilities might also help root the class more firmly in the new setting.

magic, adamantine weapon with alignment descriptors identical to your alignment (i.e. a lawful good character's unarmed attacks would become both lawful and good when this ability was activated). Activating this ability is a free action that can be taken multiple times in the same round. You can use this ability a number of times per day equal to your Constitution bonus.

Palm Power Style Power List

Psychic warriors specializing in the Palm Power martial arts style select their powers from the following list.

0-Level—*bolt, control shadow, far punch, finger of fire, my light, trinket.*

1st Level—*biocurrent, firefall, grease, lesser metaphysical weapon, psycholuminescence, stomp.*

2nd Level—*control flames, burning ray, ecto puppet, ectoplasmic cocoon, sever the tie, sudden minor creation.*

3rd Level—*cone of sound, control sound, greater concussion, metaphysical weapon, whitefire.*

4th Level—*fabricate, inertial barrier, mass concussion, quintessence, wall of ectoplasm.*

5th Level—*ectoplasmic armor, ectoplasmic predator, brilliant blast, psychic vampire.*

6th Level—*flaming shroud, disintigrate, greater biocurrent, null psionics field.*

Responsive Body Mastery

All martial arts promote athleticism, but the Responsive Body style trains a psychic warrior to shape her physical form to her will in ways that other martial artists can only dream about. To a master of this style, the body is like clay to be molded into whatever weapon is needed.

Prerequisites: Responsive Body specialization, Earth's Embrace†, Fists of Iron†, Improved Grapple†, Improved Trip, Improved Unarmed Strike, Psionic Fist*, 12 ranks in Stabilize Self*.

Benefit: You gain a +3 competence bonus on Disguise, Escape Artist, and Stabilize Self checks.

Responsive Body Style Power List

Psychic warriors specializing in the Responsive Body martial arts style select their powers from the following list.

0-Level—*catfall, elfsight, lesser natural armor, talons, valor, verve.*

1st Level—*biofeedback, bite of the wolf, compression, hammer, hustle, vigor.*

2nd Level—*body adjustment, body equilibrium, claws of the bear, expansion, painful touch, sustenance.*

3rd Level—*bite of the tiger, claws of the vampire, ectoplasmic form, improved biofeedback, rejuvenation.*

4th Level—*dissolving touch, immovability, polymorph self, psychofeedback, natural armor.*

5th Level—*adapt body, energy barrier, graft weapon, metamorphosis.*

6th Level—*ethereal jaunt, improved vigor, shield of prudence, suspend life.*

Shadow's Embrace Mastery

The Shadow's Embrace style is the stuff of legends. Practiced only by a few secretive clans, a student of this style learns to creep like the darkness itself, to travel in unsuspected ways, and to cloud the minds of opponents. Practitioners can move unnoticed through a crowd, walk on water or through walls, and even vanish into thin air.

Prerequisites: Shadow's Embrace specialization, Dodge, Improved Unarmed Strike, Mental Leap*, Mobility, Psionic Charge*, Psionic Dodge*, Speed of Thought*, Up the Walls*.

Benefit: When you attempt to hide while moving more than one half and up to your full speed, you do not suffer the normal -5 penalty to your Hide check. When you attempt to hide while running or charging, you suffer a -10 penalty instead of the normal -20 penalty to your Hide check.

Shadow's Embrace Style Power List

Psychic warriors specializing in the Shadow's Embrace martial arts style select their powers from the following list.

0-Level—*burst, catfall, control shadow, daze, distract, float.*

1st Level—*call weaponry, conceal thoughts, control light, create sound, sense link, spider climb.*

2nd Level—*body equilibrium, chameleon, glide, invisibility, knock, levitate.*

3rd Level—*control sound, dimension slide, false sensory input, fly, time hop.*

4th Level—*amplified invisibility, dimension door, freedom of movement, inertial barrier, mindwipe.*

5th Level—*clairtangency, teleport, teleport trigger, sending.*

6th Level—*ethereal jaunt, improved fly, mind switch, retrieve.* D

ARCANE WEATHER

by Michael Mearls · illustrated by Jeff Laubenstein

Master the Power of Magical Storms

Magic saturates many D&D campaign worlds. Wizards and sorcerers forge arcane energy into powerful spells, while clerics and druids channel the power of the gods. Any reasonably experienced fighter has an enchanted sword, a suit of magic armor, and an array of potions. Even a prosperous innkeeper might have an *everburning torch* or two with which he can keep his front porch illuminated even in inclement weather.

In a world where magic is commonplace, it stands to reason that arcane effects can occasionally spill over into the natural world. After all, magic is a force of nature that exists within the campaign world, not outside of it. As a natural force, magic normally lies unnoticed in the background until a spellcaster takes steps to call on its power and bind it to his purposes. In some cases, however, the line between the natural world and the magical forces it contains breaks down. When such an event occurs, mundane events acquire magical characteristics that transform them into dangerous, bizarre phenomena.

The results are all the more startling when magic affects a natural process such as weather patterns. An infusion of magical energy can transform an ordinary rainstorm into a roiling mass of arcane power accompanied by winds that carry howling, terrifying ghosts. Clouds infused with elemental fire can rain down massive bursts of flame and coat the countryside with ash.

Magical weather can introduce a new sense of wonder into your campaign world. It can also remind the players that magic is a dangerous force, not a mere tool to be bent and twisted as they wish. When incorporated into your adventures, magical weather can turn a mundane wilderness encounter into a deadly struggle or add another layer of danger to an urban campaign. A cyclone tinged with planar energies can provide as difficult and interesting a challenge as a many-headed hydra or a powerful lich who leads a legion of undead.

This article provides a method for incorporating magical weather effects into a D&D game. (The guidelines offered here work hand-in-hand with the rules for heat, freezing cold, wind, rain, and other weather conditions given in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.) In addition, a new "weather wizard" prestige class called the aeromancer is introduced, along with several new feats that involve the recognition and manipulation of weather patterns.

BUILDING MAGICAL STORMS

A magical storm is an unusual or violent weather pattern that exhibits one or more magical abilities. Some magical storms produce particular magical effects, such as a rain of frogs or a plague. Others affect spellcasting within their areas, often enhancing or inhibiting the casting of spells from certain schools or with certain descriptors. A magical storm also includes one or more mundane weather conditions. All these effects can be mixed or matched as you wish to create unique storms.

To build a magical storm, select a "base storm" (either mundane or magical) from the options presented in this article, or create your own. Then add one or more magical traits (see below), specifying the spell schools, descriptors, or specific spells to be affected by each. Finally, choose one or more mundane traits from the lists given for the base storm and the selected traits. You can also mix two or more magical storms together, if you like.

THE WEATHER Statistics Block

A storm of any sort can be described with a short block of game statistics, similar to that of a monster or NPC, that summarizes its abilities and effects. The template given below provides an easy way to reference weather effects.

Storm Name/Type: Temperature; wind type (normal ranged attack penalty/siege missile penalty), Fort DC, Size [of creature affected]: effect [on those creatures]; precipitation (effects); special weather traits [included only if needed].

Below are a few examples of statistics blocks for mundane storms.

Blizzard: 10 degrees F; windstorm winds (impossible/-4 penalty, Fort DC 18, S or smaller: blown away, M: knocked down, L or H: checked); snow (-4 penalty on ranged attack rolls and Search and Spot checks, one-half movement).

Greater Dust Storm: 90 degrees F; windstorm winds (impossible/-4 penalty, Fort DC 18, S or smaller: blown away, M: knocked down, L or H: checked); none; wind-driven dust deals 1d3 points of subdual damage per round to anyone caught in the open and is a choking hazard (see the drowning rule in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 85) to a traveler whose mouth and nose are uncovered.

Thunderstorm: 80 degrees F; strong winds (-2 penalty/–, Fort DC 10, T or smaller: knocked down); rain (-4 penalty on ranged attack rolls and Listen, Search, and Spot checks).

Magical Storms

Magical storms involve bizarre tempests and other natural events fueled by magical or otherworldly power. Unless otherwise noted, each lasts 2d4-1 hours and covers an area of 3d6 square miles. The descriptions given below are merely starting points; you can modify them as desired to fit your campaign world.

Magic storms move at one eighth of their base wind speed in miles per hour. Magic storms with wind speeds less than 1 mile per hour or less are treated as stationary.

Arcane Storm

When an arcane storm rolls into an area, barely a hint of its true power is apparent to most observers, but wizards, sorcerers, and other arcane spellcasters can feel the oppressive weight of its fury. Clear, calm weather usually accompanies such a storm. The air smells faintly of ozone, sparks flare when metal strikes metal, and spellcasters hear a faint, droning buzz in their minds that rises and falls with the storm's strength.

An arcane storm tears apart magical energy, twisting it like a hurricane twists coastal buildings. This effect causes a spellcaster's power to fluctuate wildly. One moment, a mighty wizard's spells fizzle out in a flash of sparks. The next moment, a weakling apprentice unleashes a spell at a power level far beyond his capability. A successful Knowledge (arcana) check (DC 20) reveals the presence of an arcane storm.

Each time an arcane spellcaster tries to cast a spell while within the storm's area, his caster level either increases by 1d4 points or decreases by 1d4 points (50% chance for each). This alteration applies only to the casting of that spell; the character's caster level returns to normal immediately afterward. Should the character's caster level drop to zero or below, the spell is lost.

If desired, you can create an arcane storm that affects only divine magic or one that affects both arcane and divine magic. You can even create one that affects one or more spell schools, descriptors, specific spells, or some combination thereof.

Mundane Effects: Calm winds, clear skies, moderate temperature, any type of precipitation.

Divine Storm

A divine storm appears when a deity either enters the Material Plane or directly touches it in some manner. A deity can also dispatch a divine storm to aid supporters. The tremendous influx of divine magic warps and twists the atmosphere, producing a storm with hurricane winds and rain.

Each divine storm is infused with the essence of the deity that created it. Thus, such a storm has an alignment subtype—chaotic, evil, good, lawful, or some combination thereof—that matches an aspect of its creator's alignment. The alignment subtype determines the storm's effects, as given below.

Chaotic: Chaotic storms result when planar energies from strongly chaotic realms, such as Pandemonium, cross over to the Material Plane. These powerful thunderstorms feature multi-hued, ever-shifting clouds that produce rainfall, snow, and hail, as well as more unusual types of precipitation (frogs, chunks of wood, or other objects; see below). The kind of precipitation changes at seemingly random intervals. Every 2d6 minutes that the storm persists, roll d% and consult the table below to determine the nature of the precipitation.

In addition, a chaotic storm has a bizarre effect on anyone trapped within it. Each minute that a creature remains within a chaotic storm, it must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 15) or turn into a randomly determined monster as though it were the target of a *polymorph self* spell. To determine the creature's new form, roll on a random encounter chart (such as Table 4-39 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). Regardless of the result, the affected creature must make a new saving throw against the *polymorph* effect each minute that it remains within the storm's area. The creature reverts to its original form when it leaves the area or when the storm ends.

CHAOTIC STORM Precipitation

d100	Effect
1-10	Rain
11-20	Snow
21-30	Sleet
31-40	Hail
41-50	Stones
51-60	Small animals
61-70	Bones
71-80	Blood
81-90	Feathers
91-100	Reverse precipitation

Rain, Snow, Sleet, or Hail: See the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 87.

Stones: Small rocks pummel the ground, dealing 1 point of subdual damage per minute to each creature caught in the open. Otherwise, treat this effect as hail.

Small Animals: Snails, crabs, rats, and other small creatures fall from the air. Upon hitting the ground, they split open and rapidly decay, creating a horrid stench that deals 1d4 points of Strength damage to every creature in the area that fails a Fortitude save (DC 15). The

slime and blood from the creatures' broken bodies reduces movement by one-half. When the storm ends or passes from the area, ability scores damaged by this effect return to normal, and the remains of the tiny creatures disappear.

Bones: Human bones tumble from the sky, forming small piles that assemble themselves into skeletons, animate, and attack. Each minute that this effect continues, there is a 25% chance that 1d4 skeletons attack any creature or group of creatures within the area. Once the storm ends or passes from the area, the skeletons clatter to the ground in pieces.

Blood: Blood falls from the sky like rain, staining the land a crimson red. Every creature caught in this rain must make a Fortitude save (DC 15) or be nauseated for 1d4 rounds.

Feathers: A great, dense cloud of feathers fills the air, hindering sight and muffling sounds. The feathers impose a -4 penalty on all Listen, Search, and Spot checks made in the storm's area. Visibility is limited to 5 feet, and all targets within that range have one-half concealment.

Reverse Precipitation: Water rises from puddles and lakes, and snow soars into the sky, leaving the ground bare and clear.

Mundane Effects: Any. In addition to randomizing the precipitation, the chaotic storm's winds and severity vary wildly from minute to minute. Every 2d6 minutes, roll 1d100 to determine the wind's current speed in miles per hour.

Evil: These storms form thick, dark clouds that blot out the sun and render the day dark as night. The howling wails and moans of undead creatures echo from the clouds.

Each nonevil living creature in the storm's area with 3 or fewer Hit Dice must make a successful Will save (DC 13) or become shaken (-2 morale penalty on attack rolls, checks, and saves). An evil storm's dark energy also has a sustaining effect on undead: Every undead creature in the storm's area gains turn resistance +2 if it did not already have that ability, or increases its existing turn resistance by +2.

Mundane Effects: Thick clouds, rain or snow, any sort of wind.

Good: This divine storm manifests as a bright, warm day. The sun shines even at night, helping to drive evil and undead creatures into their dark homes underground. The air has a slight scent of cinnamon, which serves to hearten good creatures and give them the strength and confidence to stand strong in battle.

While in the area of this storm, each evil creature with 3 or fewer Hit Dice must make a successful Will save (DC 13) or suffer a -1 morale penalty on attack rolls, checks, and saves. Each good creature within the storm's area gains a +1 morale bonus on attack rolls, checks, and saves.

Mundane Effects: Clear sky, light wind.

Lawful: Lawful deities send these storms to regions their followers wish to pacify or conquer. A lawful storm manifests as a set of perfectly formed, square blocks of cloud that create an evenly spaced pattern in the sky. The creatures and objects in areas covered by this storm quickly fall into predictable, orderly patterns. Herds of cattle march in precise formations, while a sheet of paper torn to pieces and tossed into the air falls into a perfectly arranged pile.

A lawful divine storm might lack the pyrotechnics of a good or evil storm, but it represents a much more sinister danger. Every minute as a free action, any lawful creature in the storm's area may issue a one-word order that functions like a *command* spell (as the spell as if cast by a 1st-level caster), except that it can be directed at one or more specified targets within 20 feet. The order affects up to the commanding creature's Hit Dice in targets. If creatures in excess of this limit are targeted, those with fewer Hit Dice are affected first. Lawful creatures are immune to this effect; every other potentially affected creature must make a Will save (DC 11 + commanding creature's Charisma modifier) to resist. This effect ends when the storm does.

Mundane Effects: A lawful storm usually exhibits one single set of weather conditions, which remains in force for the full duration of the storm. Common conditions include snow (which blots out the environment and gives the terrain a uniform color and shape) and strong, steady winds.

Fire Storm

In a fire storm, thick, red clouds filled with the seething power of elemental fire float through the sky. Thundering explosions echo within these clouds, scattering a light rain of ashes over the land. The temperature rapidly soars above 100 degrees, vaporizing light snow and small puddles of water in the space of 10 minutes.

Any spell with the fire descriptor cast within the area of this storm receives the benefit of the Empower Spell feat, or the Maximize Spell feat if it is already empowered. An elemental with the fire subtype gains temporary hit points equal to its Hit Dice in a fire storm, and any Reflex save made to avoid catching fire or to extinguish flames suffers a -2 circumstance penalty.

Mundane Effects: Strong or faster winds, hail (chunks of coal), dust storms, windstorms, tornadoes.

Hell Storm

Spawned from the very depths of Hell, this fiery cyclone carries with it a host of imps and lemures, plus a few more powerful devils. These outsiders dance and caper in the hell storm's winds, spreading destruction and death as they please. A hell storm's black clouds gather the sun's light and transform it into a rust-red hue that bathes the land below. A thick stench of brimstone and sulfur overwhelms all other odors, while the heat soars to more than 100 degrees, even in the depths of winter.

Water simmers in the heat of this storm, dealing 1d4 points of subdual damage per hour to each aquatic creature in contact with it. For each hour spent within a hell storm, there is a 25% chance to encounter a group of devils with an Encounter Level appropriate for the creature or group.

Mundane Effects: Howling winds that carry the laughter of devils and range from moderate to fast speeds, rain, hail, tornadoes.

Murderous Heat

This subtle, deadly form of magical weather slowly wears down the nerves and will of its victims, transforming them into murderous psychopaths over the course of a few days. A murderous heat is a hot, humid weather system infested with dark magic. Creatures exposed to this heat slowly become more irritable and ill-tempered. Eventually, this seething rage explodes into violence. A simple jest or a jostle that normally would pass without a word now sparks a fist fight.

Murderous heat lasts 2d4+1 days. For each day that it persists, every creature

within its area must attempt a Will save (DC 10 + the number of days the heat has persisted). Failure indicates that the creature resorts to violence the next time it faces a stressful situation or a conflict of any sort. For example, a merchant might lunge at the throat of a customer who attempts to barter down prices, or a city guard might beat a man senseless merely for setting up his market stall too far out in the street. Such a bout of violence lasts for 2d6 rounds, after which the victim regains his or her senses. This violence is a mind-affecting, Enchantment effect.

Mundane Effects: Light wind, searing heat, high humidity.

Plague Winds

The gods of plague and contagion delight in spreading sickness across the world. In regions where an epidemic has scythed through the population, the survivors whisper of a foul-smelling, tainted wind that flowed through the region, carrying death wherever it blew. A plague wind can range from a fearsome storm that saturates an area with disease to a light breeze that slowly sows the seeds of sickness.

Plague winds are rarely easy to identify. Although they occasionally carry a scent of rotten eggs or spread a green haze across the sky, the lords of disease prefer subtler weapons that strike their victims unaware.

A plague wind lasts 2d6+1 days. Select a disease from the table on page 75 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. Each day that the winds persist, every humanoid in the area is exposed to that disease and must attempt a Fortitude saving throw at the given DC to resist its effects. A +2 circumstance bonus applies to this save because of the diffuse nature of the disease.

Mundane Effects: Any wind.

Psychic Storm

This powerful mote of psychic energy disrupts the minds of creatures within its area. A psychic storm is like a pit in the psionic landscape—it draws mental energy into it, saps the minds of living creatures, and disrupts their ability to think clearly. To all outward appearances, whatever mundane weather pattern previously existed continues as normal; wind, rain, snow, and heat are unaffected by the storm's development. Instead, its signs can be found in the actions of those who must endure the mental tempest.

The first noticeable sign of a psychic storm occurs 24 hours after the storm starts. All creatures in the area are plagued by vague but terrible nightmares that disrupt their sleep. A wave of forgetfulness, sloppy work, absentmindedness and general incompetence follows the first night of this effect and persists throughout the storm. Every creature in the affected area takes a -2 competence penalty on all skill checks because of fitful sleep and inability to focus on the tasks at hand.

After 1d4 days of this effect, the symptoms begin to worsen. Psionic abilities fail to function 25% of the time, and the action used to activate such an ability is wasted if the attempt fails.

The storm reaches its peak 2d6 days after it begins. A spellcaster or a psionic creature must make a Concentration check (DC 20 + spell level or power level) to successfully cast a spell or use a psionic ability. The same check is required for the use of spell-like abilities. Furthermore, every creature in the storm's area must make a successful Will save (DC 15) or suffer a crushing headache that imposes a -2 circumstance penalty on attack rolls, checks, and saving throws. The -2 competence penalty previously applied to skill checks also remains in effect. These effects persist for 1d4 days.

Once the peak period is over, the storm takes another 1d4 days to dissipate. During this time, only the initial -2 competence penalty on skill checks remains. All penalties disappear when the psychic storm ends.

Mundane Effects: Any.

Magical Weather Traits

The following traits affect the level of magical energy in a storm system or area. Each description includes a list of mundane weather conditions that might accompany the trait. Magical traits can be applied to both mundane and magical base storms.

Deadening Air

Sometimes the ambient magic in an area drains away, making spellcasting a trying, difficult task. The weather reflects this lack of energy with utterly still air, moderate temperatures, and cloudy skies.

Select one or more schools of magic or spell descriptors (such as electricity, fire, fear, or sonic), or some combination of both. A spellcaster attempting to use a spell that falls into any of the selected categories must make a successful Spellcraft check (DC 10 + spell level + 1d10) to cast it; otherwise the spell fails and is lost. (If desired, you may specify the variable adjustment portion of the Spellcraft DC rather than rolling it to reflect the specific level of magic in the area.) Unless otherwise stated, a deadening air effect lasts as long as the storm with which it is associated.

You can also specify particular spells to be affected, in addition to or instead of schools of magic and spell descriptors, if the logic of the situation requires it. Thus, a deadening air effect can be custom-designed to match the overriding nature of an area, or to dovetail with its history and the legends that surround it. For example, a temple to the god of the sea might have a permanent deadening air effect that makes it difficult to cast fire spells. Likewise, any spell that creates water should be difficult to cast in a magically created desert.

A successful Wilderness Lore or Spellcraft check (DC 10) detects the presence of deadening air. A second successful Spellcraft check (DC 30) identifies the spell school or descriptor affected.

Mundane Effects: Calm winds, overcast skies, moderate temperature.

Magical Flux

Just as a storm causes the air to roil in fury, so too can it interfere with the natural flow of magic. A magical flux augments the power of certain spells when they are cast within its area.

Select one or more schools of magic or spell descriptors (such as fire, fear, or sonic), or some combination of both, plus one metamagic feat. Any spell that falls into any of the selected categories automatically gains the benefit of the metamagic feat you have chosen when cast within the storm's area. The caster need not have access to the feat to gain this benefit. If desired, a caster can negate the metamagic effect by making a successful Spellcraft check (DC 15) upon casting the spell. Unless otherwise stated, a magical flux effect

lasts as long as the storm with which it is associated.

As with the deadening air trait, you can also specify particular spells to be affected, in addition to or instead of schools of magic and spell descriptors.

A successful Wilderness Lore or Spellcraft check (DC 10) detects the presence of a magical flux. A second successful Spellcraft check (DC 30) identifies the spell school or descriptor that the flux affects and the metamagic feat that it applies to spells.

Mundane Effects: Winds, rain, hail, or any other stormy condition.

AEROMANCER PRESTIGE CLASS

Most spellcasters pay little heed to the source and flow of magical energy. Throughout their training, they learn to consider the typical state of magic as the accepted norm, rather than one of several different states. The aeromancer, however, studies the ebb and flow of magical energies, unlocking the patterns of arcane power that move beneath and through the world's natural weather systems. To an aeromancer, an innocent-seeming drizzle or a sudden breeze holds the secrets of magic. As she advances, she learns that magic dances around her in varying levels of power that merely appear to average out to the level otherwise considered typical. These subtle clues combine to grant her insight into how magical energy moves, how she can harvest it even in the most difficult conditions, and how to tweak the local magical conditions to suit her needs.

HIT DIE D4

AEROMANCER Requirements

To become an aeromancer, a character must fulfill the following criteria.

Knowledge (arcana): 14 ranks.

Knowledge (nature): 5 ranks.

Feats: Any two metamagic feats.

Special: Access to and ability to cast the spells *gust of wind* and *control weather*.

AEROMANCER Class Skills

The aeromancer's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are as follows:

Str: –

Dex: –

Con: Concentration.

Int: Alchemy, Craft, Knowledge (all skills, taken individually), Scry, Spellcraft.

Wis: Profession.

Cha: –

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All the following are class features of the aeromancer prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Aeromancers gain no new weapon or armor proficiencies.

Spells per Day/Spells Known: At 2nd level and at 4th level, an aeromancer gains new spells per day (and spells known, if applicable) as if she had also gained a level in a spellcasting class to which she belonged before adding the prestige class. She does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained (metamagic or item creation feats, for example). If the character had more than one spellcasting class before becoming an aeromancer, the player must decide to which class to add each level for determining spells per day and spells known.

Magical Flux (Su): Beginning at 1st level, an aeromancer can create a subtle magical weather system centered on herself that duplicates the magical flux trait described above. The character selects one school of magic or spell descriptor to be affected. She also chooses one metamagic feat she possesses that raises the required spell slot of an affected spell by no more than one level. Creating a magical flux requires a full-round action.

The magical flux fills a 50-foot-radius spread that is centered on the aeromancer and moves with her. Within this area, a highly localized weather pattern (DM's choice) is also in effect. This weather pattern can not be one severe enough to impose penalties or inhibit actions. For example, a light, misty rain might fall in the area, a flurry of winds might surround the aeromancer, or a slight patina of frost might cover the ground if she lingers too long in one place.

While the magical flux is in effect, every spellcaster in the area (including the aeromancer herself) automatically applies the benefit of the selected feat to each spell from the designated category that she casts. If desired, a caster can negate the metamagic effect by making a successful Spellcraft check (DC 15) upon casting the spell.

A successful Wilderness Lore or Spellcraft check (DC 10) detects the presence of a magical flux. A second successful Spellcraft check (DC 30) identifies the spell school or descriptor that the flux affects and the metamagic feat that it applies to spells.

The character can use this ability once per day per aeromancer level, and the effect lasts 10 minutes per aeromancer level or until dismissed. Dismissing a flux is a standard action.

An aeromancer may have no more than one magical flux in operation at a time.

Deadening Air (Su): At 3rd level, the aeromancer can create a deadening air effect as a full-round action. This effect occupies the same area as his magical flux, and the two effects may operate concurrently if desired. The aeromancer may choose one school of magic or one spell descriptor to be affected. Any spellcaster (including the aeromancer herself) attempting to use a spell from the selected category must make a successful Spellcraft check to cast it; otherwise the spell is lost. The DC for this check is 10 + spell level +1d10.

A successful Wilderness Lore or Spellcraft check (DC 10) detects the presence of deadening air. A second successful Spellcraft check (DC 30) identifies the spell school or descriptor affected.

The aeromancer can use this ability once per day per aeromancer level, and the effect lasts 10 minutes per aeromancer level or until dismissed. Dismissing a deadening air effect is a standard action.

An aeromancer may have no more than one deadening air effect in operation at a time.

Create Magical Storm (Sp): At 3rd level, the aeromancer learns to produce magical storms with her *control weather* spell. The character may add the following magical storms described above to the list of weather patterns she can summon in any season with a *control weather* spell: arcane storm, divine storm, fire storm, and psychic storm. A magical storm produced in this manner lasts for the duration of the spell. If the aeromancer also has a deadening air or a magical flux effect operating at the same time, she may apply that effect to the magical storm as well (or he may

PREDICTING WEATHER

Characters can use the Knowledge (nature) skill to predict the weather. Although weather has little impact on most adventures, a trek through an arctic tundra or a scorching desert can go from difficult to fatal as the weather changes in severity, and knowing a day ahead of time that a magical storm is due in the area can mean success or failure from some heroes.

Once per day, you may attempt a Knowledge check (DC 10) to predict the weather for the next day. A character can predict weather patterns farther than one day in the future, but each day beyond the first increases the DC by 5. For example, predicting the weather for the day after tomorrow requires a successful Knowledge (nature) check (DC 15). Predicting a magical storm is much more difficult than predicting normal weather. Any time that a character attempts to predict the weather for a day during which a magical storm will occur must exceed the day's normal DC by 10 in order to also accurately predict the magical storm's occurrence. If a character's Knowledge Nature check exceeds the day's normal DC by less than 10, the character knows the general weather for the day but does not know of the impending magical storm.

If a character fails to meet the required DC, the prediction attempt fails and the character does not learn anything about the day's weather. Any time a character fails a Knowledge (nature) check to predict normal weather by more than 5, the character receives false information about the day's weather.

apply both effects, if both are operating). In such a case, the parameters—that is, spell school(s), spell descriptor(s), and metamagic feat, if applicable—that she has already established for those effects also apply to the storm. Note that magical storms created with this ability last only 2d4-1 hours (the normal duration for magical storms) rather than the 4d12 hour duration of the *control weather* spell.

Augmented Deadening Air: At 5th level, the aeromancer may choose two schools of magic, two spell descriptors, or one of each for her deadening air to affect.

Augmented Magical Flux: At 5th level, the aeromancer may choose two schools of magic, two spell descriptors, or one of each for her magical flux to affect.

Transcend Weather (Su): At 5th level, the aeromancer gains the ability to ignore the effects of mundane or magical weather by sheathing himself in a well of magical energy. She suffers no ill effects from extreme heat or cold caused by the weather, winds simply flow around her, and magical storms have no detrimental effects on her. The aeromancer can freely choose which effects of a weather pattern she wishes to nullify; thus, she can still receive the benefits of a magical flux without the harmful effects of whatever weather it accompanies. Transcend weather protects the aeromancer only from the direct effects of wind, temperature, and magical storms; it offers no protection against flood waters caused by rain, snowdrifts, visibility problems, or other indirect effects of weather. This ability is always active unless suppressed or dismissed. The aeromancer can activate or dismiss the effect as a standard action.

NEW FEATS

A wizard who practices magic in an area with lower than normal levels of magical energy might find that her spells are much stronger when she enters a region of normal magic. A frontier ranger might learn to predict a plague wind after surviving the effects of one. The new feats presented below reflect the benefits of exposure to or study of arcane weather.

Forceful Magic [General]

You learned magic in an area where spells were difficult to cast due to the prevailing arcane weather.

Benefit: Once per day, when preparing or casting any one spell augmented by a metamagic feat, you may reduce the required spell slot increase by one.

Special: You may take this feat more than once. Each time you take it, you can apply the effect to one additional spell per day. You may not apply it more than once to the same spell.

Spell Toughness [General]

Your exposure to a magical flux has left a minor aura around you that deflects certain spells.

Prerequisite: A previous encounter with a magical flux attuned to the school of magic or descriptor you select for this feat.

Benefit: Select one school of magic or one spell descriptor. You gain a +3 bonus on saving throws against spells from that category.

Weathered Traveler [General]

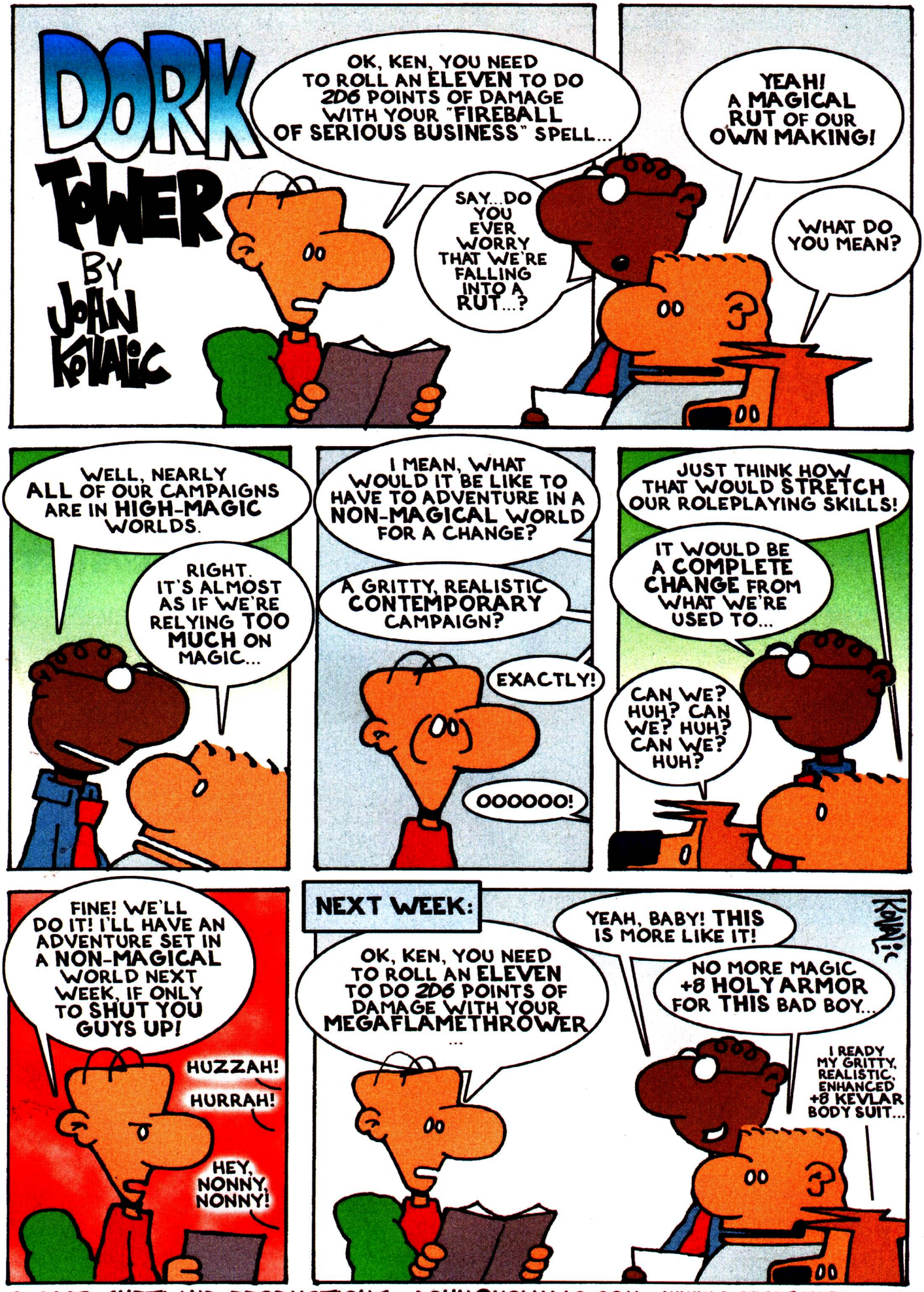
The terrible hardships you have endured in your travels have inured you to snow, howling winds, and searing heat.

Prerequisite: Toughness.

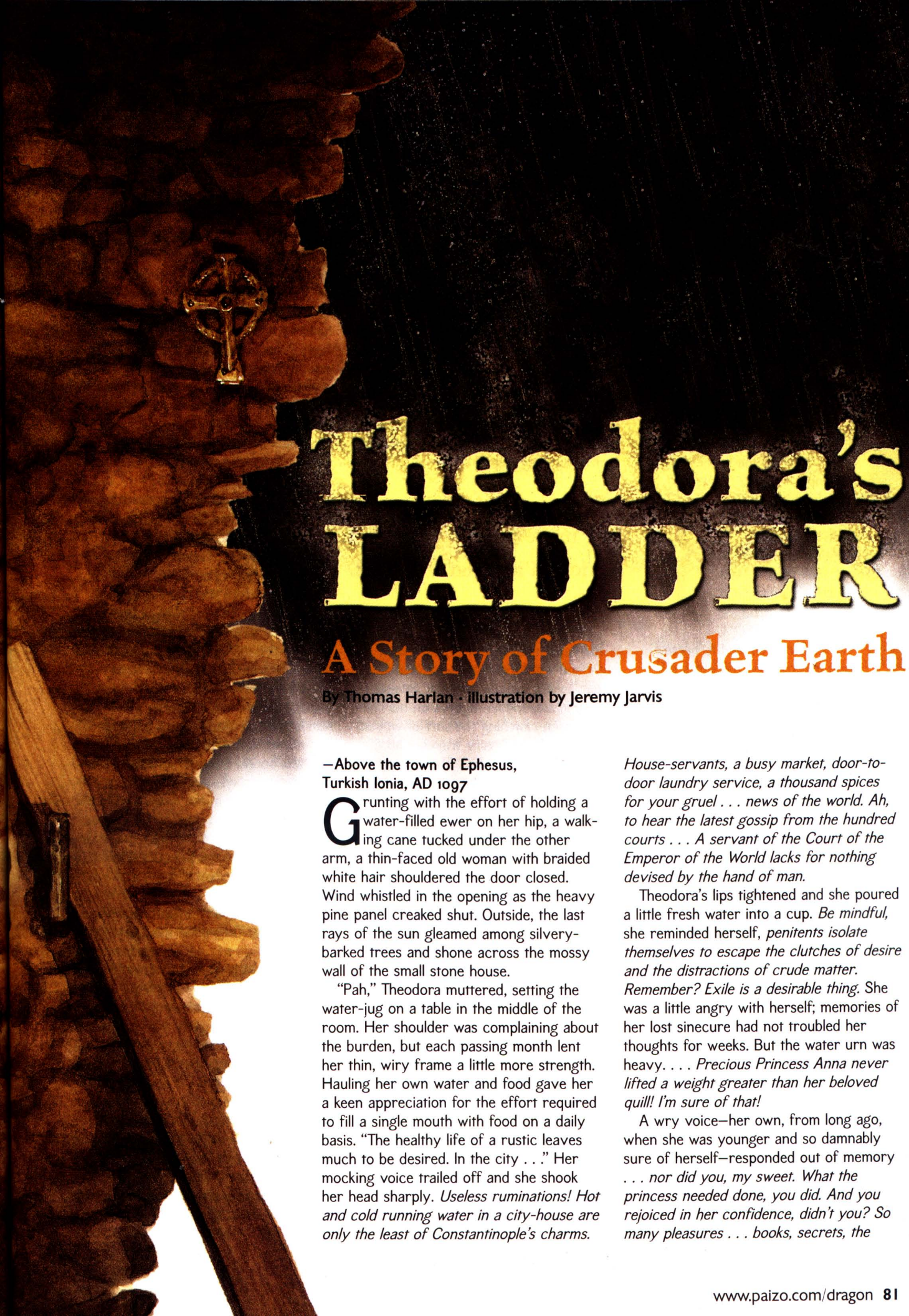
Benefit: You gain a +4 bonus on saving throws made to resist mundane and magical weather effects. D

AEROMANCER Advancement

Level	Base Attack	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day
1	+0	+2	+0	+2	Magical flux	
2	+1	+3	+0	+3		+1 level of existing class
3	+1	+3	+1	+3	*Create magical storm*, deadening air	
4	+2	+4	+1	+4		+1 level of existing class
5	+2	+4	+1	+4	Augmented deadening air, augmented magical flux, transcend weather	


DORK TOWER
BY JOHN KOVALIC
OK, KEN, YOU NEED TO ROLL AN ELEVEN TO DO 2D6 POINTS OF DAMAGE WITH YOUR "FIREBALL OF SERIOUS BUSINESS" SPELL...
SAY...DO YOU EVER WORRY THAT WE'RE FALLING INTO A RUT...?
YEAH! A MAGICAL RUT OF OUR OWN MAKING!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
WELL, NEARLY ALL OF OUR CAMPAIGNS ARE IN HIGH-MAGIC WORLDS.
RIGHT. IT'S ALMOST AS IF WE'RE RELYING TOO MUCH ON MAGIC...
I MEAN, WHAT WOULD IT BE LIKE TO HAVE TO ADVENTURE IN A NON-MAGICAL WORLD FOR A CHANGE?
A GRITTY, REALISTIC CONTEMPORARY CAMPAIGN?
EXACTLY!
OOOOOO!
JUST THINK HOW THAT WOULD STRETCH OUR ROLEPLAYING SKILLS!
IT WOULD BE A COMPLETE CHANGE FROM WHAT WE'RE USED TO...
CAN WE? HUH? CAN WE? HUH? CAN WE? HUH?
FINE! WE'LL DO IT! I'LL HAVE AN ADVENTURE SET IN A NON-MAGICAL WORLD NEXT WEEK, IF ONLY TO SHUT YOU GUYS UP!
HUZZAH!
HURRAH!
HEY, NONNY, NONNY!
NEXT WEEK:
OK, KEN, YOU NEED TO ROLL AN ELEVEN TO DO 2D6 POINTS OF DAMAGE WITH YOUR MEGAFLAMETHROWER...
YEAH, BABY! THIS IS MORE LIKE IT!
NO MORE MAGIC +8 HOLY ARMOR FOR THIS BAD BOY...
I READY MY GRITTY, REALISTIC, ENHANCED +8 KEVLAR BODY SUIT...
KOVALIC

© 2003 SHETLAND PRODUCTIONS JOHN@KOVALIC.COM WWW.DORKTOWER.COM



Theodora's LADDER

A Story of Crusader Earth

By Thomas Harlan · illustration by Jeremy Jarvis

—Above the town of Ephesus, Turkish Ionia, AD 1097

Grunting with the effort of holding a water-filled ewer on her hip, a walking cane tucked under the other arm, a thin-faced old woman with braided white hair shouldered the door closed. Wind whistled in the opening as the heavy pine panel creaked shut. Outside, the last rays of the sun gleamed among silvery-barked trees and shone across the mossy wall of the small stone house.

"Pah," Theodora muttered, setting the water-jug on a table in the middle of the room. Her shoulder was complaining about the burden, but each passing month lent her thin, wiry frame a little more strength. Hauling her own water and food gave her a keen appreciation for the effort required to fill a single mouth with food on a daily basis. "The healthy life of a rustic leaves much to be desired. In the city . . ." Her mocking voice trailed off and she shook her head sharply. *Useless ruminations! Hot and cold running water in a city-house are only the least of Constantinople's charms. House-servants, a busy market, door-to-door laundry service, a thousand spices for your gruel . . . news of the world. Ah, to hear the latest gossip from the hundred courts . . . A servant of the Court of the Emperor of the World lacks for nothing devised by the hand of man.*

Theodora's lips tightened and she poured a little fresh water into a cup. *Be mindful,* she reminded herself, *penitents isolate themselves to escape the clutches of desire and the distractions of crude matter. Remember? Exile is a desirable thing.* She was a little angry with herself; memories of her lost sinecure had not troubled her thoughts for weeks. But the water urn was heavy. . . . *Precious Princess Anna never lifted a weight greater than her beloved quill! I'm sure of that!*

A wry voice—her own, from long ago, when she was younger and so damnably sure of herself—responded out of memory . . . *nor did you, my sweet. What the princess needed done, you did. And you rejoiced in her confidence, didn't you? So many pleasures . . . books, secrets, the*

confidences of kings . . . "Bah!" Theodora drowned the cup and hung her cloak upon a peg by the door.

The sun was setting and there were few lamps to be found on the rugged slopes of Mount Prion. When the light of day died, even an old nun should be abed. Beside the table was a simple shrine—an icon of Holy Maria, mother of God, flanked by two candles and some smudges of incense. The old woman tucked a tendril of white hair behind her ear and knelt to pray.

Darkness crept across the room, filling up the spaces left by the departing sun. Unbidden, the two candles sparked alight, throwing a warm glow against a roof of shale tiles. When she realized what she'd done—out of habit, no more, no less—the old woman grumbled to herself again and pinched the wicks out with thumb and forefinger. *Fine beeswax candles are hard to come by, here in this barbarous desolation, not like in . . .*

"Oh," Theodora growled, "to bed and to sleep already!"

▼▼▼

A muttering growl of approaching thunder shook the walls of the house. Inside, Theodora woke abruptly, roused not by the growl of the storm but by a sharp rapping on her door. Frowning, wondering who would be mad enough to venture up the mountainside in such foul weather, Theodora crawled out of her nest of quilts and blankets. She tossed more wood on the fire, which had burned low during the night. From the ashes, dawn was drawing close.

"Who comes at such an hour?" Her voice was stiff with sleep.

"Please," came a thin, exhausted voice. *A woman,* Theodora judged. "Please help us."

Now who has gotten themselves in trouble? The old woman could think of a dozen women living in the church complex at the base of the mountain, but few of the sisters there would need to roust her from sleep at this foul hour. *Someone must have fallen sick,* she realized. *Damnation.*

"Just a moment." Wrapping a charcoal-colored habit around thin shoulders, the old woman gathered up her walking cane and unbarred the door. Although her house was perched high on the mountain, she lived in troubled times, and it was not impossible a band of bandits had ridden up from the port to do her mischief, disguised as a young woman speaking City-Greek. A wrinkled hand swung the stout door inward, cane firm in a ready grip.

{ They made a bedraggled pair, **hunched against the cold.** }

Rain spattered out of a pitch-black night and a cold, clammy wind clutched at her ankles. Leaping firelight revealed two hunched, sodden figures on her porch, each clutching the sort of woven bag favored by pilgrims traveling to the shrines in the city below. Theodora gave the two vagrants a sharp stare.

"Who are you," she said, rather irritably, "and what do you want with me?"

"Sanctuary," replied a hesitant male voice. The taller of the two figures doffed a battered straw hat, sending thin streams of water splashing across the doorstep. "Please, my lady, the priest said there was a house—a holy dwelling, where Maria, the mother of God, lived out her last days long ago—and we desperately need protection and shelter."

"Yes, please help us . . ." The second voice chimed in harmonious soprano to his tenor. A woman's face—a young face, streaked with rain, eyes red-rimmed with exhaustion or fear—peered out from beneath the second hat. "We've come so far . . ."

"Come in then," Theodora said, her voice brusque. They made a bedraggled, forlorn pair, hunched against the cold. She stood aside as they hurried in, spilling water and mud on her clean floor. The old woman closed the door slowly, leaving aside the bar, and watched her unexpected guests closely as they shed their woolen cloaks and set aside their mournful-looking hats. Her eyes, deep blue surrounded by fine wrinkles, narrowed in suspicion.

The boy—he could barely be called a man—was tall and lean, with high cheekbones and long dark hair. He shed the cloak clumsily, ignoring the despondent girl, his fierce attention fixed on Theodora. The old woman brushed her hand across the surface of the door, feeling the last vestiges of sleep fall away in a rush of chill adrenaline. *Worse things than bandits are abroad tonight,* she thought in disgust. *Is there no peace to be found in disgraced retirement?*

"Which of the brothers did you catch, unaware, outside the bounds of the church?"

The boy affected surprise, golden eyes going wide at the accusing tone in her voice. "Catch? I do not understand . . . we were given directions . . ."

"Does your guide still live?" Theodora circled the table in the middle of her small, ill-furnished house. She would have preferred the fire to lie between them, which was impossible given the location of the chimney. The boy followed her movement with a languid turn of his fine-boned head. The intensity of his gaze pressed—prickling and prying—against her mind, and Theodora took care to avoid meeting his eyes. The details of his shirt, belt, shoes, and cloak were of more pressing interest.

"I am sure everyone in the monastery is entirely content," the boy said, lifting his chin to show off an aquiline, handsome profile. The ruddy firelight deepened his hollowed cheeks and drew a sparkle from his eyes. Theodora felt a little start of familiarity and knew—in a sharp, discrete moment—not who the boy was, for such pretty young men were common enough in certain circles, but whose company he had most recently kept.

Such a refined, courtly air he has. She fought to keep a snarl from her face. *And at least one well-intentioned priest lies cold beside the Ephesus road . . . I see the manners of the great have not changed since I departed the city.* "Fools do say the dead are content. Well, you stand uneasy in my house. What do you

you wish of an old, decrepit woman?"

The boy stared at her, puzzled. He frowned, stymied by her arch, hectoring tone.

"Alastor . . ." The girl's voice was well trained, Theodora thought; husky, rich, and vibrantly low. She huddled by the fire, pale hands reaching out to the flames. The old woman could only afford to let her eyes rest on the wan, sallow visage for a moment, but this was enough. The artful paints and powders that would normally disguise the thickened jaw, the razor-sharp bones showing beneath too-tightly stretched skin, had been washed away by the storm. "She knows what you—what we—are."

"And a poor scrawny meal I'll make," Theodora said grumpily, "for two fine young *vrykolakes* on the hunt." She paused, lip curling as she glanced from the boy to the girl. "Or do you prefer to be called *lamiae*? So your kind were called when I was a child . . ."

"Well, then . . ." Alastor straightened himself, looking down a long thin nose at Theodora. The pose would have carried more weight if his shirt and hair did not cling so wetly to such a skeletal frame. The old woman realized he was desperately trying to project an air of menace and power. Unfortunately, his voice trailed off into a quaver. "We—Philinnion and I—need your help. There are men chasing us. They will . . . they will kill us if we are found."

"How very surprising." Theodora watched the boy's face and hid a tiny sigh. She turned her attention to the girl, who had withdrawn from the fire to perch on the end of the table. "Do you own more than the single, frail wit the Lord above gave this pretty thing?"

Philinnion's dark eyes glanced to young Alastor, then back to Theodora. In the brief moment of distraction, the old woman made a complex throwing motion towards the fireplace. The burning logs brightened subtly, filling the room with a warm, clear light. Theodora saw the girl was not so young as she'd first appeared—the impression had been one conveyed by voice, posture, and poor light more than physical evidence—and the acid fear so apparent in Alastor's guileless countenance was entirely missing from the woman's.

"There are *vampirii* hunting us," she said, speaking in a more normal voice. "We heard this place would be proof against them. A sure sanctuary within the hands of the Madonna."

Theodora tried to keep her surprise from showing. Her white brows furrowed in consideration. *Someone's told these ancient children quite a vivid tale.* "Your own kin are hunting you? Why?"

Alastor blanched, arsenic-pale skin tinged with an unhealthy pallor. The boy wrung his hands, peering fretfully from one woman to the other. Fear leached the cultured tones from his voice, revealing a harsh Macedonian accent. "They think . . . they think I betrayed our lord and master to the Emperor's Guard! But I didn't! I swear it! Someone told them lies . . . now they course after us like hounds, implacable and deadly. All we do is run and run again!"

Theodora jerked back, blinking at his inhuman quickness.

He made a sudden movement and Theodora jerked back, blinking at his inhuman quickness. She felt cold, her heart leaping in her chest in reaction. Alastor stopped abruptly, staring at her with too-familiar desperation and hunger in his liquid eyes. "Is it true you have power over the dead? You can protect us from *them*? Her Ladyship said you would . . . we have a letter of introduction!"

"I am not sure," Theodora said, drawing out her words as she watched Philinnion's pale face over the boy's shoulder, "anyone can keep *you* safe. But I believe you did not betray your master."

"You do?" Alastor's head made a small, abrupt motion, as if he'd struck his forehead against an invisible barrier. The faintest spark of hope kindled in his wan, haggard countenance. "By the gods, you're the first to credit me! Everyone else treats me as if I were the most reckless child!"

"I know." Theodora shifted her grip on the cane by a fraction. "Tell me, young man, did the beautiful Philinnion struggle much, when you came to her at night? Did she fight your so-irresistible will?"

Alastor laughed, turning to look proudly upon the woman. Philinnion was staring at Theodora with a sick, desperate look. The boy preened, running thin fingers back through his hair. "Of course not! She was most obliging once I'd caught her eye . . . some are, you know."

"I do." Theodora turned her body into line with his. "Had you ever caught such a delicate prize before? She is a beauty."

"No." The boy shook his head, silken mane rippling across his shoulders. "The ladies of the Court are well guarded—often we'd prowl the boundaries of the palace, but they are held so close, watched over by the Church—oh, barking curs they are—ceaselessly vigilant . . ." He reached down and brushed a fall of wheat-yellow hair away from Philinnion's elegant neck. "Taking her was sweet victory."

"Isn't that odd," Theodora said softly, her hands twisting on the cane. "Dearest Philinnion, of all the guarded ladies, is left alone, at night, in the dark. Someplace quiet . . . a bower . . . a garden. And you are waiting and she is there, never lovelier . . . far different than your usual prey—infants, pregnant mothers, children laid low by summer fever. Someone you could never touch, even in breathing life, and then—lo!—she was within your grasp at last."

"She *is* beautiful," Alastor said, fondly, his fingers threading through her hair. He started to turn towards Theodora, the faintest frown beginning to mar such fine, handsome features. "But you're right—where were her guardsmen? She was . . ."

Theodora struck, spinning, the full weight of her frail old body behind the blow. The boy turned directly into the point of the blade hidden in her cane. He jerked as elf-metal punctured his skin, clove past ribs, penetrated the silent, still heart withered beneath the breast. Theodora grunted in effort, her lips tight in a furious grimace and twisted the blade free with a flourish.

The vampire coughed hollowly, stale

air rushing from his lungs and crumpled to the floor.

Philinnion gave a strange, wailing cry, one arm thrown up across her face and tried to stand. Theodora ignored her—there were only seconds to spare—and slashed the blade across the boy's neck. Steel grated against tendon and bone. She sawed the edge back and forth, putting all her strength into the motion. There was a rasping sound and then the head sprang free, rolling across the floor.

There was no blood.

The thunder moved off, muttering on the lower slopes, and now the roof vibrated with the constant drumming of heavy rain.

▼▼▼

The boy's skull smoked and sputtered in the fire, hair burning merrily, sending up a thick cloying smoke into the flue. Theodora advanced on the woman, but saw her moment of opportunity had passed. Philinnion backed away, flaxen hair a golden storm cloud around a haggard, lined face. A feverish energy filled the woman's countenance.

"The guardsmen of Alexius, avtokrator of the Romans, master of the world," Theodora said conversationally, "do not commonly dirty their blades with—what was your barbarian term—*vampirii*. Such vermin are left in the able hands of the Church exorcists . . ."

Philinnion smiled—brilliant, white, showing a phantom of the beauty she had once commanded—and laughed. "It was said prince Nicephorus Diogenes plotted against the Emperor—he and his friends were betrayed and met a terrible, terrible end—and Alastor's maker was among them. He was surprised, I think, to smoke away his life on an impaling spike in the Hippodrome. I did not see his end, of course, but Alastor and I surely *felt* it."

"Ah." The nun tried to ignore a flood of old memories. *Unlikely little Nicce would remember his auntie Theodora after so many years. So perishes the last son of Emperor Romanus the Unlucky. A pity. Those boys once showed great promise. . . .* "A simple matter for you to catch the eye of a clerk and add a name to the list of traitors—was there ever a plot at all? Did a hundred officers, their wives, children, and families, all perish to hide your ambition?"

Philinnion waved a negligent hand. She was gaining strength and confidence as Theodora watched, which did nothing to stem the fear surging in the old woman's stomach like acid.

"Who were they? No one important—Anatolian exiles—always plaguing Admiral Ducas while we sat to dinner, spoiling his mood. I'm sure the Emperor is pleased as well, glad to be rid of their constant demands for war!"

> Did a **hundred officers** **all perish** to hide your ambition?

"And now you are free," Theodora said consideringly, rapping her cane against the crumbling, desiccated body at her feet. "Out of thrall twice over. Alastor's maker burned to ash. Alastor himself no more than bones on my floor. You are your own mistress at last . . ." She nodded her head in appreciation of the strategem. "Very Byzantine, if I may borrow a Frankish epithet. The *drungaros* John Ducas shouldn't have set you aside like that . . . but men are often foolish."

"He *is* a fool!" Philinnion's dulcet voice sparked with well-remembered injury. "With a fickle, wandering eye . . . but the great Admiral shan't forget me when next we meet—oh no, he'll find me irresistible! This time—"

The woman halted abruptly, turning blazing eyes upon Theodora. "You are a clever old thing aren't you? Just standing there, watching me with such a placid gaze—I must admit, I feared dear Anna's *Historia* was filled with lies—but now I wonder! She surely told the truth about *you*."

"You and the Emperor's daughter have been friends for a long time?" Theodora kept rampant speculation from her voice, struggling to maintain calm in the face of such a troubling revelation. *This barbarian ninny was let within the Imperial household? What depths has the city fallen to now?*

"She has been kind to me," Philinnion said, her face softening in memory. "Once or twice we'd met when the great admiral allowed me upon his arm at court—and after cursed John Ducas put me aside for a slip of a Cretan girl, after I convinced Alastor to take me into his embrace—she was the only one who would treat me with respect. She was even civil to this poor silly boy." The woman's eyes hardened, staring at the dust and bones scattered on the floor.

Ah. Theodora nodded in apparent sympathy. *And dear Anna has eyes keen enough to see what others might miss, hidden beneath fancy paint and powder.*

"You are well favored, lady. Few even know the princess keeps an account of her father's court—much less have seen the pages themselves. I had not thought she bore such a grudge against John Ducas . . . " Her voice hardened. "but the Court is a nest of vipers, scheming and crawling—one must cultivate a thick hide against their fangs and thicken the blood against their venom."

"Oh, Anna and John are no longer on friendly terms." Philinnion demonstrated her negligent wave of the hand again. Theodora's eyes narrowed—*Such artful movements they both have . . . someone is making good money training ambitious youth for the Court.* "And dear Anna is not so close with her books as you think, at least, not with *me*." She smiled at Theodora again, her unlined face suffused with golden light from the hearth. "I found the account of your struggle against the Arab wizards thrilling! You were lucky to survive!"

"Yes, I was lucky," Theodora said, buying time as she ransacked her memory for anything in her sordid youth involving Arab wizards. Princess Anna Comnena had not been privy to everything she'd done in the service of the Empire. *It's been so long . . . wait! The Arabs have no wizards, traffic in the secret arts is forbidden by the holy quran . . . Ah. I see.*

If her memory served, Anna's secret history was forbiddingly accurate. A careful and astute woman, the princess, blessed with a clever, quick mind. Theodora missed her company desperately, although they had not been confidantes for a long time. *So this child used Alastor to give her the key to Ducas's heart, and then Anna deceived her in turn . . . and I must clean up the mess. Or am I the mess to be tidied away? The intrigues of the court have a long reach to find me here!*

"But you should not take such tales at face value." Ancient pain glittered in Theodora's eyes. "What might seem brave service to you was only a sordid, evil business. Such acts dig a deep pit for the soul—far enough down, you cannot even remember the sun." Her voice trailed off, then strengthened. "A ladder to reach the light is made of prayer, child, and honest regret. No, I was only fortunate to live."

Philinnion shook her head, making thick, rich hair rustle. The heat of the fire had dried her clothes and skin. "You're not just lucky," she said in an appraising, hungry tone. The woman rose, bare feet light on the floor. "Dear Anna was very circumspect, but I have wit enough to see past her allusions and prosy words. You have *power*—far more than a quick wrist or clever eye."

"Do I?" Theodora tried to relax, although her body wanted to tense and flee. The room felt very, very small. Four paces from side to side was not enough room to confront an enraged *vrykolaka*, even one newly freed of the blood-binding. "Such power as I own, I cannot give to you. I do not even understand how it came to me."

Philinnion shook her head once, sharply, nostrils flaring. Firelight blazed in her eyes. "I've no wish to spend an age inured with musty books and illegible scrolls—indeed I think your power will endure, even when you've come to unlife by my hand."

"Oh." Theodora tried to sound surprised, edging to the left, towards the door. "A *vampirii* sorceress would be a useful tool—particularly as I expect you wouldn't let yourself be duped like poor Alastor."

"No." Philinnion took two steps sideways, darkness flowing with her like a living tide, and her white arm was athwart the door. "He was a pretty, trusting fool—a toy of the Night Court in their revels—and so well matched to my hand it tears my heart to see him dust. He ran all this way without even checking to see if we were truly pursued." The girl laughed gaily, raising an elegant, tapering finger. Her nails had grown in the passing hour, thick and keen as blades. "But your life I will take in trade, in *weregeld* for his, although I gain much in the exchange."

Theodora shifted her feet, adjusting her grip on the cane. The old, worn beechwood staff felt very thin and fragile in her hands. *I must thank dear Anna for this evening's diversion,* she thought, forcing her breath to an even temper, *should I ever see the scheming, duplicitous busybody again.*

> Your life **I will take in trade, in weregild for his**, although I gain much in the exchange.

At least the rain seemed to be letting up outside.

▼▼▼

Philinnion moved in a lightning-quick burst, leaping across the room just as Theodora blinked. The old woman felt herself lifted up and smashed back against the wall. Gasping for breath, she tumbled onto her bed with a crash. The *vrykolaka* wrenched her cane away, flinging the beechwood across the room. Theodora rolled, taking a backhand blow on her shoulder. Bone cracked under skin, but she managed to gulp a precious breath before the impact threw her into the doorframe.

Sprawling on the floor, Theodora managed to turn, one hand slashing the air. *"Astrapa!"*

Philinnion rushed forward, full into a searing blast of green flame. A thunderclap followed, shattering dishes on the mantle and blowing the table to splinters. Philinnion howled in surprise, shrugging aside the blast, outstretched claws tearing through Theodora's habit. A fist wreathed in a smoking viridian halo lashed out and the old woman felt herself catapulted through the air. Crying out in anguish, ribs broken, she flew out through the door—which obligingly swung open at the impact—across the porch and into a gorse hedge.

The *vrykolaka* bounded out into darkness, lit only by flames hissing from the scorched rear wall of the house. The woman cast about, gleaming eyes searching the woods. Rain spattered down out of invisible clouds—despite the hour, it was still pitch dark under the roof of the storm. Theodora wrenched her arm free of grasping thorns, then slipped free of the tangled habit. Staggering, clad only in her nightshirt, she crashed off through the brush.

Philinnion heard and sprang into pursuit. Leaping across the gorse hedge, the *vrykolaka* cried out in delight to see Theodora dodging off among the trees, a white ghost of a shape in bare, muddy feet.

"There's no hope in flight," Philinnion caroled, bounding through the wood. "You're just not fast—ayyy!"

Theodora flew up into the trees, a pale streak barely visible in the light from the burning house. Philinnion laughed in delight, then sprang up, crashing through low-hanging branches, finding her footing light on twigs barely thick enough to hold a sparrow.

"I can fly, too!" Shouted the *vrykolaka* with wild, sudden joy. She burst through the crown of a giant oak, arms spread wide, gloom thickening around her in spreading wings. Theodora was clinging precariously to the very top of the trunk. Philinnion giggled, entranced by her ability to spring lightly from branch to branch, supported only by sprouting leaves.

Given a bare moment to gather herself, Theodora searched the horizon desperately, and then flung up her hand, shouting *"Pneumatas!"*

with all the strength left in her battered frame.

A wild, sweeping wind answered her call, roaring across the treetops, shaking the forest in rippling waves. Above, heavy clouds heaved and boiled, splitting and reforming in wild vortices. Philinnion staggered, struck by a blistering gust, then she howled, wrenched free of the oaken crown by shrieking winds. Swift zephyrs lofted her into the sky, spinning the creature around like a leaf.

Below, Theodora swayed, her perch buffeted by rivers of violent air. The oak groaned and creaked, but held against the gale. The old woman took a firmer grip, wrapping one leg around the narrow trunk. A mote of darkness in the sullen, gray-black sky plunged toward the roof of the forest, then suddenly changed course, rushing toward the nun. Philinnion sprang from treetop to treetop, her voice a wail of hatred and fury.

"That's it . . . closer . . ."

Theodora settled her mind, forcing her thoughts into the unnatural pattern known to her from earliest dreams. She had often tried to express the feeling in words or signs or diagrams and had ever met with failure. *How does a man breathe? How does a fish swim?*

She clenched her fist against the raging sky. *"Astrapa!"*

Once more the heavens lit with a shuddering flash. Lightning licked down from surging clouds, smiting the *vrykolaka* with a blazing fist. Wreathed in smoke, Philinnion smashed through burning branches. Wood squealed as iron-hard talons gripped tight. Fire roared around the creature, but she sprang free, taking to the air once more.

Philinnion seemed unhurt, even invigorated by the fray. Theodora felt drained, squeezed down to the last dram of strength. She coughed, licking parched lips.

The creature stood poised, only a dozen yards away, her gown a smoldering wreckage, clawed toes around a pendant branch, wheaten hair streaming out behind a feral, angular head. "You're not strong enough to bring me down, old woman! Even new-come into this unlife I am strong! Stronger than you, stronger than the weak men who discarded me in the city . . ."

"So you are." Theodora closed her eyes, offering up a feeble prayer to holy Maria Panagia and spread her hands wide one last time. She could feel the onrushing shape of the *vrykolaka* as a black pressure against her mind. "*Pneumas . . . pneumas . . . pneumas . . .*"

Philinnion crashed into her tree, shaking the trunk. Theodora swayed, feeling her grip fail. A claw-like hand seized the old woman's throat, dragging her from the uneasy perch. Philinnion's gay smile turned cruel, white teeth sharp as pins. Theodora felt muscle rip, torn by long talons, even as the winds she'd coaxed forth from the storm howled and roared, pressing back cloud, forcing aside the heavy gloom. The rain stopped, lifting a hissing gray veil, and far to the east, the upper edge of the rising sun shone clear above the mountains.

A claw-like hand **seized the old woman's throat,** dragging her from the uneasy perch.

"Too late," the old woman croaked, trying to pry iron-hard claws from her throat. "Sol invictus! See, comes the conquering sun!"

A shining beam lanced out from the radiant disk and Philinnion screamed as sunlight flooded across her face and shoulder. Gleaming skin blackened with dizzying speed, her beauty burned away, hair flashing to smoke.

"To pteron!" Theodora gasped, spending the last of her strength, the creature's suddenly leaden body tangling with hers. Together they crashed through the leaves and plunged into the gloom of the forest below. Theodora twisted as they fell, her face lacerated by branches and Philinnion struck the ground with a gargling cry, the nun's weight crushing into hers.

Smoke boiled from the creature's face and upper body, although unnatural life still twitched in the limbs. A high keening wail rent the air, shivering the trees. Theodora rolled away, one thigh scored and bleeding by a thrashing claw. Her thin old hands grasped hold of a mossy stone, wrenching the chunk of limestone from sodden ground.

When she turned, Philinnion was trying to rise, still burning, gaping mouth spewing smoke and a grating, horrible choking sound. Theodora—face grim and set—smashed the rock into her head, knocking the *vrykolaka* to the ground. The thing squirmed in the mud, trying to get away, but the old woman, possessed by implacable fury, pinned it to the ground with a bloody knee.

Choonk! Choonk! Choonk!

Ashy stone slipped from nerveless fingers. The ground was littered with splintered bone and bits of smoking flesh. The old woman tilted sideways, tried to catch herself and then collapsed onto the ground, unable to move.

▼▼▼

Theodora's eyes flickered wide, staring at the fog curling among the trees. The vampire's corpse was still and silent, legs and arms askew. Sighing with relief, she rolled over gingerly, arms wide to keep from putting any pressure on her abused chest.

"*Vigor*," she muttered, closing her eyes, trying to reach into the pattern coiled in the back of her mind. It seemed very distant for a moment. "*Vigor . . .*"

Hot warmth flooded her limbs. Pain receded.

Cold and wet, the old woman heaved the headless corpse onto her shoulders, ignoring the bite of still-hot ash on bare skin. Her fingers found enough purchase in the thing's burned, matted hair to lift the head.

Exhausted, bruised, battered, and trembling with cold, Theodora made her way across the hillside, angling up and away from her ruined house, the seared body a crushing weight on her back, even with most of the flesh burned away to dust. A dim, thready glow of dawn began to suffuse the forest, making the tree-trunks emerge

in ones and twos
from the mist and fog,
gray stippled against gray.

▼▼▼

On the slopes of Prion, high above Theodora's shale-roofed hut, the old woman climbed over an ancient, crumbling wall. Thin, reddish brick crumbled under her tread. The *vrykolaka's* weight had grown with each exhausted step.

Hunched over almost double, the nun crossed a floor of fallen leaves, dirt and twigs. Here and there, bits of bright mosaic gleamed in the dawn light. The floor had suffered in long centuries exposed to the sky, the tesserae dulled by time.

Theodora dumped the corpse at the center of the old villa, being careful to place the head a goodly distance from the body. Biting her lip to stifle a groan of pain, she hunted through the half-standing walls and broken arches. At last, rummaging aside a wealth of broken amphorae and glazed pottery fragments, she found a store of dried wood.

A half-hour later, as the sky steadily brightened and the clouds fled out over the still-dark sea, muttering tiredly, she dragged a stick across the disordered leafy carpet.

Flame whooshed from the wood. Philinnion's body was neatly arranged on the pyre; scorched, discolored skull set at the creature's feet. Theodora touched the brand to tinder and within moments the corpse was wreathed in snapping flame. She stepped away, shading her face against the heat rolling away from the creature's funereal blaze.

Squinting, Theodora watched, seeing the bones and skin dissolve to ash. Then, as the bone of the skull fractured and split, the plume of smoke rising above the fire caught the light of the sun, shining down through the mossy gray trunks of the forest. In the shifting half-light, eyes watering, the old woman thought she saw a glorious shape bending over the crumbling skeleton.

A beatific woman cloaked by the new sun, the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of glittering stars.

The ghost of a despairing wail echoed faintly among the trees, but was swallowed by the fog. Then the fire guttered out, leaving nothing but ash scattering in the wind across the tiled floor. Theodora touched her brow in respect and turned away.

Her back hurt, her chest a crushing vise, her shoulder was filled with needle-sharp pains and every step down the green, mossy hillside sent a jolt of fire through her thighs. Theodora bitterly missed her walking cane, lost somewhere in the ruins of the house. Halfway down the slope, she found a twisted bit of limb which would serve, at least until she was home again.

> Back into the heady, **fierce rush of intrigue** and conspiracy.

The forest was silent as she made her way across the gray, glistening stones and past twisted, bent trees. Only the thready, bitter smell of wood smoke hanging in the air served as a guide.

▼▼▼

The lightning had not set everything in her home alight, only the bed, the wicker baskets with her store of food and the remains of her clothing. One chair remained intact, and the scattered belongings of her night visitors had survived, as had the beechwood cane.

"Ah!" Theodora snatched up the walking stick, feeling greatly relieved to feel the familiar smooth shape in her hands. The iron ferrule covering the elf-metal blade lay against the fireplace, but had not melted in the blast. "That's one thing put right," she said, surveying the damage as she screwed the weapon back together.

Her eye caught upon the lamentable Philinnon's pilgrim bag, which was stuffed full of oddments. Theodora made a face, laying out combs and little jars of unguent and salve and face powder. "Vain enough for the Court, I see . . . oh, Indian lead powder! Nearly full too . . ." She tucked the prize away in her own bag. "And a . . . letter? I'd have not thought she could read, had she not made such a point of the matter."

Theodora sniffed disdainfully, lifting the parchment envelope out with her thumb and forefinger. Turning the missive over, however, her eyebrows rose to see dusky red sealing wax and a too-familiar seal. "So—was the dizzy child telling the truth? Hard to believe . . . yet they *did* know where to find me."

The old woman split the seal and snapped the letter open. The lines within were in a crisp, sure hand, guiding impeccably dark ink across snow-white paper:

Anna Comnena to her Theodora, greetings. Two friends I send to you. Treat them with the hospitality they deserve and only you can supply. When their time with you is done, come to me, for I have great need of your service . . .

"Service?" Theodora spat on the floor. She felt bitterly ill-used. "Someone murdered, she means. Perhaps this same John Ducas of such fickle taste in bedlinens. Perhaps the Franks. Perhaps the Turk. There is always someone needing proper 'service' . . . "

. . . in Judea, where a situation has arisen.

Sullenly, she looked around at the wet, scorched ruin of her home. Outside, the close ranks of the forest were dripping and gray, the air filled with a chill bite. Theodora paced to the door, grumbling, and saw the valley below lazing in the sun. The distant curve of the Cayster shone mirror-bright, interrupted only by a tan streak where the north road vaulted the river on an ancient bridge. The road to Constantinople. To the Emperor's court. Back into the heady, fierce rush of intrigue and conspiracy flowing in the veins of the Greeks like summer wine.

"It *would* be nice to see the city again . . . "

Finis

CLOSE UP: REVISED CLASSES

THE NEW Barbarain, Fighter, and Ranger

3.5 UPDATE

by Ed Stark · Illistrated by Jeremy Jarvis

As this article passes through editing, everyone in the RPG R&tD department of Wizards of the Coast (and we do mean everyone) is working hard to get the final galleys of the revised *Player's Handbook, Dungeon Master's Guide,* and *Monster Manual* through typesetting and out the doors to the printer. The process won't be finished until mid-April or so, but the final bolts are being tightened right now.

I hope you'll be happy to know that these articles, and the articles that Steve Winter and Julia Martin have put on **www.wizards.com**, have had several effects on the revised books. We've even inspired the subtitle. When you see the covers of the revised PH, DMG, and MM, you'll notice a small plate on the bottom front that says "Core Rulebook I" (or II or III, respectively) followed by "v. 3.5." It was a term coined during the planning of the first Revision Update, and it became popular enough to stick.

Not all of your feedback has had such cosmetic impact, however. One of the main reasons we're still working furiously on these books is that feedback from you, from the folks who frequent our message boards, and feedback from many of the most popular d20 publishers (most of whom have early drafts of the books) shapes many of our final decisions. Obviously, we don't make changes at this late date without excellent reasons and due consideration, but changes do get made.

THE REVISED CLASSES

In an informal poll that conducted through this column, many of you commented that learning about changes to individual classes was important to you. This month, we show you the different levels of changes we made to three classes that should illustrate the sorts of things we did to all eleven classes and even the prestige classes in the *Dungeon Master's Guide.* We've chosen the fighter, the barbarian, and ranger as the sample classes because they illustrate the three levels of revision we made in the classes.

A Few Changes: The Fighter

In the 3.5 update to D&tD we made very few—almost no—changes to six classes: the fighter, paladin, wizard, cleric, rogue, and sorcerer. The rogue has a few tweaks mostly in presentation of abilities. The wizard, cleric, paladin, and sorcerer feel the impact of the revision in changes to their spells, but the fighter isn't dependent upon spells. The fighter, however, does have a prime selection of feats. Here's a rundown of some of the changes to the fighter in D&tD 3.5

Class Philosophy: The philosophy behind the fighter class didn't change. He is still the most well-rounded martial combatant in the game, with the most access to feats that allow him to be customized continually.

Ability Changes: The fighter's main abilities (base attack bonus, saving throw progression, and proficiency with weapons and armor) didn't change. The addition of weapon familiarities based on race opened up a few more options (the dwarven fighter can now wield dwarven waraxes and urgroshes without spending feats on those exotic weapon proficiencies), but that's more of a racial change than a class change.

The whole feats chapter, however, underwent some revision, and the fighter's list of bonus feats expanded. You can see some of the changes in the sidebar entitled Fighter Bonus Feats.

Obviously, this is a much larger list of bonus feats than the fighter had in the original *Player's Handbook.* Over the past three years, our game designers and our fans have developed a number of additional feats, and it wouldn't have been much of an update to the game if we didn't include some of them in the new books. There are more than 100 feats in the 3.5 PH, and the fighter gets his share.

We didn't do this just because we wanted to expand the base number of feats, however. We also did this to keep the fighter more viable and more interesting at higher levels. Feedback from many of you said that about the time the single-class fighter hit 12th level or so, he didn't have many interesting choices left and might as well multiclass. While the game certainly supports multiclassing at various levels, we didn't want that to be the only interesting choice. Now, the fighter not only has more bonus feats to choose from, but more feats throughout the game.

Skills and Skill Points: The fighter still ploughs most of his knowledge and

learning into feats and martial abilities. He receives the same number of skill points per level. However, because of overwhelming demand (and because it just makes a lot of sense), the fighter now has Intimidate as a class skill. Many of you said you were giving it to him anyway, and we want to design a game where the rules match the way you want to play it.

Moderate Changes: The Barbarian

Classes that received moderate changes include the barbarian, druid, and monk. The monk's special abilities changed a little bit, and the druid got a boost to her spell choices as well as some reworking of her wild shape ability and her animal companion rules. As you might guess, the barbarian benefits from many of the changes that affected the fighter, although not as dramatically. More feats and more combat maneuvering means more for the barbarian to choose from as well, but there are more substantive changes to the barbarian class too.

Class Philosophy: The barbarian is still the high-hit point, chaotic brute, so there are no real changes there.

Ability Changes: The barbarian relies on his specific class abilities to make him more than a lightly armored fighter. Review the Barbarian Class Abilities sidebar to see some of the changes. If you don't see a class level indicated, there isn't a significant change to the barbarian at that level. If a class ability is listed in the 3.0 PH but not noted or superceded here, it is still available (for example, barbarians still gain fast movement and rage 1/day at 1st level).

The reasons for the changes to the barbarian's special abilities are threefold. First, the barbarian now gains a special ability at every level, much like the monk. The 3.0 barbarian's class ability table had gaps and clusters of abilities, making some levels clearly more "valuable" than others, making the choice to "opt out" and multiclass more tempting in appearance than it actually was.

Second, many of the barbarian's abilities that looked valuable weren't valuable when he received them. Like the monk's *ki* strike ability (discussed a few issues ago), by the time the barbarian gained his trap sense ability and his damage reduction, the bonuses just weren't very meaningful. Now, he gains trap sense while he's still worried about traps and DR begins at a level where it actually makes a difference in fights.

The third reason for the changes to the barbarian's class abilities rests in keeping the class exciting. Many of you told us that too many players simply picked up one level of barbarian to get the rage ability and then progressed along the fighter path. Hopefully, these options and the great capstone ability (those high untyped bonuses to Strength, Constitution, and Will saving throws) make the barbarian a more viable, continuing option.

Skills and Skill Points: The barbarian gains the same number of skill points as before but receives a somewhat hidden "bump." The skill Intuit Direction and the skill description of Wilderness Lore have both been subsumed in a new skill called Survival, which is on the barbarian's class list. Intuit Direction was just too specific a skill to survive the revision, and we found that many people didn't like the name Wilderness Lore—it made them think it was a Knowledge skill and caused confusion. Survival now does the work of both skills.

BARBARIAN CLASS ABILITIES

Barbarian Level	Special Ability	Notable Change
3	Trap sense +1	The barbarian now gains a bonus to Reflex saves and AC vs. traps much earlier.
6	Trap sense +2	The escalation of the Reflex bonus improves more quickly.
7	DR 1/-	The barbarian now gains DR much earlier.
9	Trap sense +3	
10	DR 2/-	The escalation of DR improves more quickly.
11	Greater rage	Greater Rage is awarded earlier.
12	Trap sense +4	
13	DR 3/-	
14	Indomitable will	New ability; +4 to Will saves vs. enchantments.
15	Trap sense +5	
16	DR 4/-	
17	Tireless rage	No fatigue after rage gained earlier.
18	Trap sense +6	
19	DR 5/-	
20	Mighty rage	New ability: Rage bonus increased to +8 Strength, +8 Constitution, +4 Will

FIGHTER BONUS FEATS

- Blind-Fight
- Combat Expertise
  - Improved Disarm
  - Improved Feint
  - Improved Trip
  - Whirlwind Attack
- Combat Reflexes
- Dodge
  - Mobility
  - Spring Attack
- Exotic Weapon Proficiency
- Improved Unarmed Strike
  - Improved Grapple
  - Deflect Arrows
  - Snatch Arrows
  - Stunning Fist
- Mounted Combat
  - Mounted Archery
  - Ride-By Attack
  - Spirited Charge
  - Trample
- Point Blank Shot
  - Far Shot
  - Precise Shot
  - Rapid Shot
  - Manyshot
  - Shot on the Run
  - Improved Precise Shot
- Power Attack
  - Cleave
  - Great Cleave
  - Improved Bull Rush
  - Improved Overrun
  - Improved Sunder
- Quick Draw
- Rapid Reload
- Improved Shield Bash
- Two-Weapon Fighting
  - Two-Weapon Defense
  - Improved Two-Weapon Fighting
  - Greater Two-Weapon Fighting
- Weapon Finesse
- Weapon Focus
  - Greater Weapon Focus
- Weapon Specialization
  - Greater Weapon Specialization

Big Changes: The Ranger

The bard and ranger underwent the most changes of any class in the 3.5 revision. The bard's bardic music ability and some other features of the class enjoyed several rounds of "tweaking," and the bard's spell list changed significantly. However, you might say that the ranger prompted a lot of the class revision discussion that went on way back in the early days of 3.0. Many people weren't satisfied with the 3.0 ranger, and many talented folks (including Monte Cook, the designer of the 3.0 *Dungeon Master's Guide*) created variant rangers or rangerlike classes that did things a little—or a lot—differently. We were torn between standing by the basic concepts of the ranger or completely rebuilding the class from the ground up. In the spirit of the 3.5 Revision, we watched, we listened, and we discussed the main issues with many of you, and we did a little bit of both.

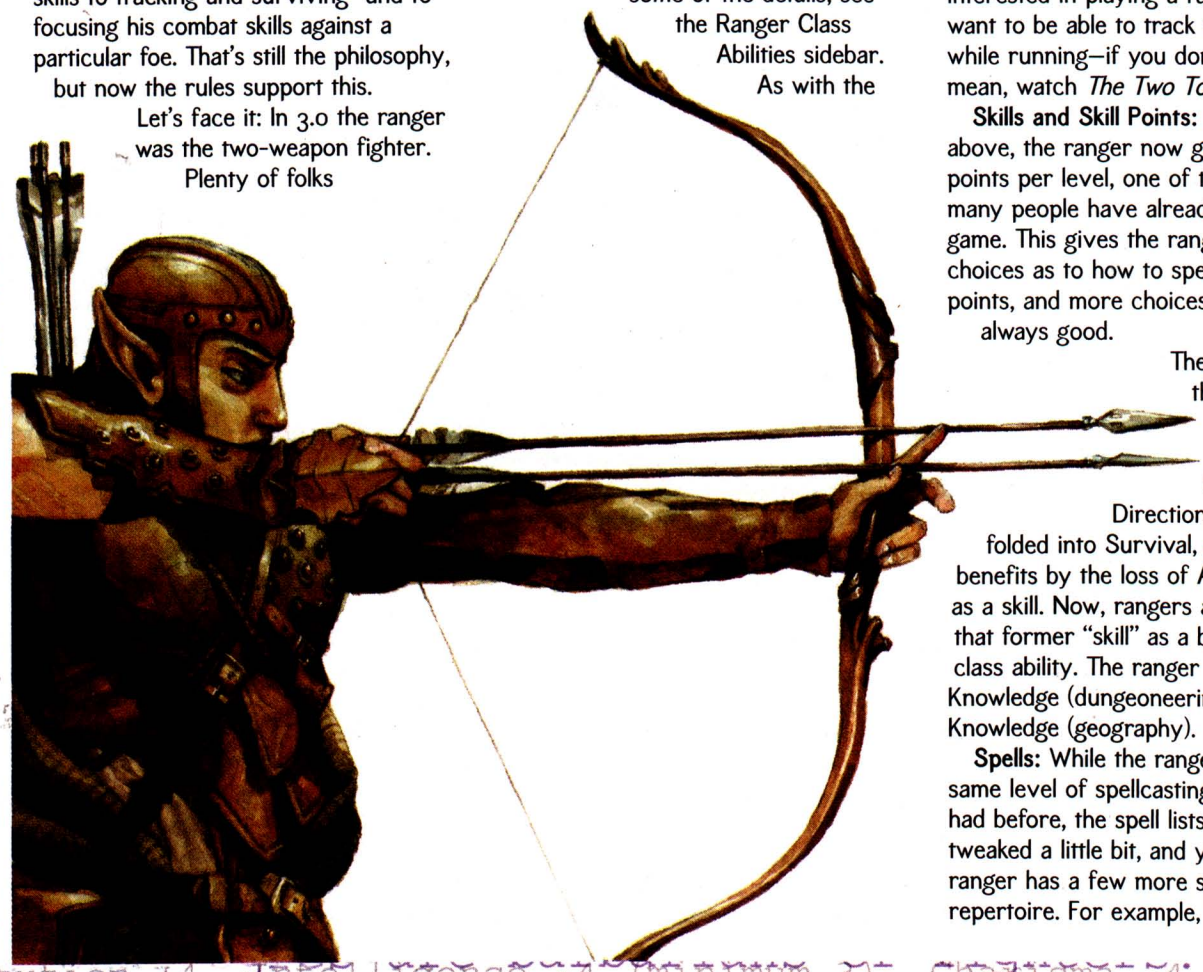
Class Philosophy: The ranger is the outdoorsman and the hunter. He's the guy who devotes his learning and his skills to tracking and surviving—and to focusing his combat skills against a particular foe. That's still the philosophy, but now the rules support this.

Let's face it: In 3.0 the ranger was the two-weapon fighter. Plenty of folks cherry-picked the class to gain a quick road to fighting with two weapons and then they moved to more interesting or versatile classes. The ranger, one of the most iconic classes in the game (after fighter, wizard, cleric, and rogue), became a bit of a second-class citizen.

You'll find that the 3.5 ranger actually moves a little bit away from being a lightly armored two-weapon fighting specialist and moves toward a solid role as a skill-using hunter. He's picked up a little bit of roguish skill use and lost a few of his fighter traits—but gained even more options along the way.

Ability Changes: The 3.0 ranger had few class abilities and lacked the versatility of the fighter, which made it a strong target for "opting out" at early levels. It also mimicked the fighter in other ways—particularly with a d10 Hit Die and only four skill points per level, just two more points than the fighter.

The 3.5 ranger goes down to a d8 Hit Die (the Hit Die he had before 3.0) but now gains 6 skill points per level. Lest you think we believe that an equitable trade straight-up, we've given the ranger a few more options as well. For some of the details, see the Ranger Class Abilities sidebar. As with the barbarian, if you don't see something, it hasn't changed significantly (the ranger's spells per day, for example, are exactly the same numerically).



Changing the ranger in this way has some overt and hidden benefits. Overtly, the class just gets more interesting and fills a more unique niche in the game. Instead of being a lesser fighter with a few more skill points, the ranger now carves out a home as the true woodsman of the party and the hunter-specialist. He has enough skill points to diversify so that every ranger doesn't look exactly like every other, and he has choices about whether to become a two-weapon wielder or not. The woodsman-archer archetype is just as easily supported.

Additionally, by giving the ranger more abilities and spreading those abilities out, we hope we've created a more viable long-term class. The ranger's favored enemy ability is more meaningful to start, and it gets better at a regular pace. The ranger's new class abilities and feats take some elements from the druid, some from the rogue, and some are wholly new (everyone interested in playing a ranger should want to be able to track their enemies while running—if you don't know what I mean, watch *The Two Towers*).

Skills and Skill Points: As indicated above, the ranger now gains six skill points per level, one of those changes many people have already made in the game. This gives the ranger some choices as to how to spend his skill points, and more choices are almost always good.

The ranger gains the same obvious benefit as the barbarian from the Intuit Direction skill being folded into Survival, and he also benefits by the loss of Animal Empathy as a skill. Now, rangers and druids gain that former "skill" as a better-defined class ability. The ranger also gains Knowledge (dungeoneering) and Knowledge (geography).

Spells: While the ranger retains the same level of spellcasting ability as he had before, the spell lists have been tweaked a little bit, and you'll find the ranger has a few more spells in his repertoire. For example, he gains *charm*

animal as a 1st-level choice, a better version of *barkskin* at 2nd-level, *darkvision* at 3rd-level, and the additional choice of *animal growth* (useful on his animal companion) in the 4th-level list.

SAME TIME, NEXT MONTH

There we go. I hope I've provided some good, concrete examples of class revisions in this article. I know everyone would like to see more, but I've only got so much space to work with—and I don't want to give you any revisions without some context to go along with them. I'll keep running through the suggestions you've made on article topics, and I hope you'll keep reading!

For more information on the upcoming 3.5 Revision, go check out our website at **www.wizards.com.** D

RANGER CLASS ABILITIES

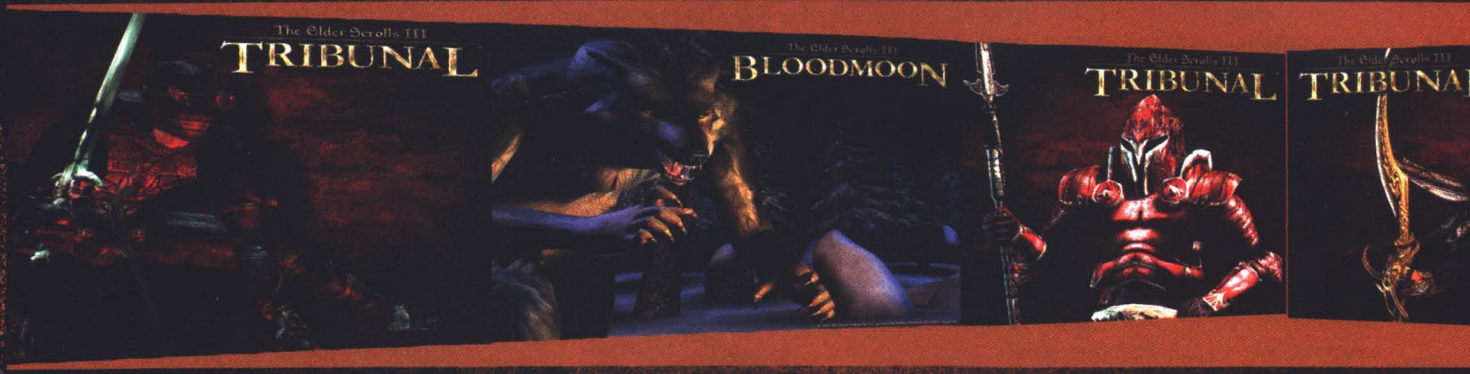
Ranger Level	Special Ability	Notable Change
1	1st favored enemy	The favored enemy bonus is now +2 to the appropriate skills and damage.
1	Wild empathy	This replaces the Animal Empathy skill and works much like Diplomacy but is only available to rangers and druids.
2	Combat style	Choose either archery or two-weapon combat; gain a bonus feat.
3	Endurance	Gain the Endurance feat (which has also improved) for free.
4	Animal companion	Gain an animal companion (similar to the druid's improved ability).
5	2nd favored enemy	Choose an additional favored enemy and the bonus on either increases to +4. (You don't have to be best at fighting your first enemy any more.)
6	Improved combat style	Gain an additional archery or two-weapon fighting feat for free.
7	Woodland stride	Gain the woodland stride (druid) ability.
8	Swift tracker	Move at normal speed while tracking at no penalty; move faster with less penalty.
9	Evasion	Gain the evasion (rogue or monk) ability.
10	3rd favored enemy	Additional favored enemy; graduated increase.
11	Combat style mastery	Gain an additional archery or two-weapon fighting feat for free.
13	Camouflage	Use the Hide skill in any natural terrain, even without cover or concealment (a lesser version of the shadowdancer's Hide in plain sight ability).
15	4th favored enemy	Additional favored enemy; graduated increase.
17	Hide in plain sight	Hide in natural terrain with no concealment even while being observed.
20	5th favored enemy	Additional favored enemy; graduated increase.

- 8306 - Players Guide to Wizards, Bards and Sorcerers - July
- 8307 - Players Guide to Fighters and Barbarians - July
- 8308 - Players Guide to Clerics and Druids - August
- 8309 - Players Guide to Rangers and Thieves - August

Morrowind: TRIBUNAL

Paths to Power: Two Epic Prestige Classes

by Clifford Horowitz · images provided by Bethesda Softworks



Tribunal is an expansion for the already rich game world that is *Morrowind*. An experience like few others, *Morrowind* uses classes and races to define your character but is more like a world than a straightforward adventure. There are quests and a central plot, to be sure, but its structure is unlike that of many other CRPG offerings. You are not led along a storyline and given side quests along the way. Instead *Morrowind* gives you an entire world to interact with, and indeed get lost in if you so wish. The overarching story is too strong to ignore forever, but you certainly get the feeling that your fate is yours to make.

The *Tribunal* expansion is simply more of the same. Mysterious and dire events bring you to Mournhold, a magnificent city that is home to an aging and mortal god, Almalexia, as well as a new king, recently risen to power under dubious circumstances. You're given the chance to explore Mournhold, the ruined undercity that now serves as its sewers, and the clockwork city of Sotha Sil, and to meet not one, but two gods. All the while, the quests grow harder, not only for the difficult combat, but for the political ramifications of the choices you must make as you perform them.

Happily, Mournhold holds much more than physical combat in its bank of challenges. Yes, there are goblins to slay (very tough, skilled, and deadly goblins—you have been warned) and assassins to thwart, but you also have the opportunity to stand in for a sick actor and be a player in a production, as well as help a young lass looking for a decent man among all the decadence of the city. The challenges are refreshing as well as fun.

Fascinating as the volatile political situation is in Mournhold, it is too complex for this column to do it justice. And while certainly worth playing through, the plot of *Tribunal* would be better represented in adventure form, since it runs like a story. However, the heart of the setting is a struggle between fading divinity and savagely ascending mortality. This type of conflict is something that could be introduced into any game, and it makes an especially interesting backdrop for an epic campaign. Presented below are prestige classes that embody the two factions: the ordinators and the empowered. Both sides transcend the limits of mere mortality; it is how they achieve this end that produces conflict.

ORDINATOR

Ordinators are holy soldiers, servants to a god that lives among them. Grueling training regimens forge muscles as hard as iron and grind fighting skills to near-mythical sharpness. Long days of exhausting runs followed by punishing weapon drills push would-be ordinators to the edge of breaking, and for those who make it past this

weeding-out period, a long series of brutal quests follow. Destroy a nest of dragons threatening an area, pacify land for colonization, raze the support of a rival god—the tasks are difficult, dangerous, and endless, and through it all, the ordinators are granted respite only in prayer. In their patron deity they find deliverance, for during prayer their worn bodies can rest and their burning lungs drink a full measure of air. This quickly builds the association between salvation and worship, adding the last component to an ordinator's deadly arsenal. Physical conditioning and martial training are smelted in a crucible of devotion that allows him to exceed his already impressive physical capabilities. By appealing to something greater than themselves, ordinators transcend mortal limits.

Were this all the ordinator had at his disposal, he would be a feared opponent indeed. But a god who did not recognize such devoted service would be foolish. Their patron deity lifts ordinators ever higher above the mortal coil, gifting them with supernatural abilities that continue to mount as the holy warriors' loyalty grows.

Ordinators believe strongly that no one need remain mortal, but such ascendancy is for the divine to grant, not for mortals to claim: The only true path to ascendance comes from above. As a whole they are highly respectful of religious authority, especially clergy, while holding a healthy disdain for those who shirk deities and serve only mortal concerns. They are often the police force in religious capitals, but they are perfectly at home as chaplains and champions in holy armies, and more than a few have served their gods through questing.

Hit Dice: d10.

Ordinator Class Features

All the following are class features of the ordinator prestige class.

Spells per Day/Spells Known: At each ordinator level, the character gains new spells per day (and spells known, if applicable) as if he had also gained a level in a spellcasting class to which he belonged before adding the prestige class level. If already an epic spellcaster, the character gains only the benefits noted under the Spells entry for that epic class. He does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained (improved chance of turning or destroying undead, metamagic or item creation feats, and so on). If the character had more than one spellcasting class before becoming an ordinator, the player must decide which class to add the new level for the purpose of determining spells per day.

Smiting: Ordinator class levels stack with any other applicable class levels for purposes of determining bonuses to attack, damage, and frequency, if applicable, of the ordinator's smite ability.

Full Smite (Su): Such is the holy power of the ordinator that his divinely charged blow falls, not like a star shot from the heavens, but like a meteor storm, a rain of holy strikes. Once per day, when making a full attack, an ordinator may apply his

ORDINATOR Requirements

To qualify to become an ordinator, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Base Attack Bonus: +15.

Epic Attack Bonus: +2

Skills: Concentration 15 ranks, Knowledge (religion) 15 ranks.

Feats: Weapon Focus (deity's favored weapon), any three divine feats or feats that improve divine abilities (such as metamagic feats applied to divine spells, or the Extra Smiting and Empower Turning feats from *Defenders of the Faith*).

Special: Ability to smite. The candidate must be chosen by an ordinator to take the trials and then succeed in a series of quests. The DM determines when these trials are complete.

ORDINATOR Class Skills

The ordinator's class skills (and the key abilities for each) are as follows.

Str: –

Dex: –

Con: Concentration.

Int: Craft, Knowledge (religion), Search

Wis: Heal, Listen, Sense Motive, Spot.

Cha: Diplomacy, Gather Information, Intimidate.

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

ORDINATOR Advancement

Level	Special	Spells Per Day/Spells Known
1st	Full smite 1/day, smiting	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
2nd	Blessed vestments +1	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
3rd	Divine mark 1	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
4th	Bonus divine feat	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
5th	Blessed vestments +2, warding hand	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
6th	Full smite 2/day, bane of infidels 1/day	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
7th	Divine mark 2	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
8th	Blessed vestments +3, bonus divine feat	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
9th	Bane of infidels 2/day	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
10th	Warding hand	+1 level of existing spellcasting class

smite ability to every attack made in the round, not including attacks of opportunity. This means every strike, including bonus strikes from haste spells and off-hand attacks, receives the smite bonus to hit and to damage. Using this ability counts as a single smite attempt, no matter how many blows are struck in a round. The ordinator may use this ability one additional time per day for every five additional levels gained.

Blessed Vestments (Su): Ordinators receive the highest quality armor their church can afford. These suits are distinctive, not only for their superb craftsmanship and heavy enhancements, but also in style, to set them apart aesthetically from those of common guards. The few times someone has successfully stolen such armor, it has proven less effective in others' hands. These blessed suits of armor are only part of the protection that ordinators gain in return for their faith and service; their patron deity protects them as well. Starting at 2nd level, the ordinator gains a +1 divine bonus to Armor Class, provided he is wearing some kind of armor. *Bracers of armor* and *rings of protection* are fine defensive tools, but they are not sufficient for this ability to function. The ordinator must be dressed in some form of physical armor to receive this bonus. Every three levels, the ordinator's divine AC bonus increases by 1.

Divine Mark (Su): As the ordinator rises through the ranks of his order, he also grows closer to his god. After a time, such prominence gains him special favor, a gift from his god that he carries always. Ordinators serving gods whose clerics spontaneously cast cure spells gain the fast healing special ability at 3rd level, beginning at 1 point per round, and increasing by 1 point every four levels thereafter.

Ordinators serving gods whose clerics spontaneously cast inflict wounds spells gain bloody attacks. All successful strikes, regardless of the weapon used, are treated as having the wounding ability, dealing 1 point of additional damage every round. Multiple attacks result in cumulative damage. Certain evil ordinators (at the DM's discretion) might instead gain the power to deal *vile wounding* damage, which cannot be healed through magical or mundane means unless the subject is on hallowed ground (or unhallowed for evil beings). The ordinator cannot deal more wounding damage with an attack than normal damage. The amount of wounding damage increases by 1 point every four levels.

Clerics of neutral deities gain one of these two abilities depending on whether or not they chose to spontaneously cast cure or inflict spells.

Bonus Divine Feat: As a result of his continuing service and unwavering loyalty to church and god, the ordinator continually gains blessings and insights on how to better use the power he is granted. Beginning at 4th level, and every four levels thereafter, the ordinator may choose any feat with the divine descriptor, or a feat that enhances one of his divine abilities (such as metamagic feats applied to divine spells, or the Extra Smiting and Empower Turning feats from *Defenders of the Faith*).

Warding Hand (Su): The ordinator's body pulses with divine energy, and his growth toward his patron deity comes to mean more than a close

EMPOWERED Requirements

To qualify to become an empowered, a character must fulfill the following criteria.

Base Will Save: +10.

Skills: Concentration 10 ranks, Knowledge (religion) 15 ranks.

Feats: Iron Will.

Epic Feats: Epic Will.

Special: The candidate may not worship outsiders of any kind; if they were clerics or worshippers of a specific god, they must renounce the god and instead become worshipers of a philosophy of idea such good, evil, chaos, humanity, and so on.

EMPOWERED Class Skills

The empowered's class skills (and the key abilities for each) are as follows.

Str: Climb, Swim.

Dex: Balance, Tumble.

Con: Concentration.

Int: Craft, Knowledge (religion).

Wis: Heal, Listen.

Cha: Diplomacy.

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

EMPOWERED Advancement

Level	Special
1st	Great Wisdom
2nd	
3rd	Will to power
4th	Great Wisdom, power of ascendancy +1d6
5th	godless ground 1/day
6th	Will to power, to stand alone
7th	Great Wisdom
8th	power of ascendancy +2d6
9th	Will to power
10th	Great Wisdom

relationship. By 5th level, the ordinator has taken a distinct step away from mortality, developing supernatural resilience. He gains damage reduction of 1/—. Every five levels, the amount of damage reduction increases but it can never exceed the ordinator's current Wisdom modifier.

Bane of Infidels (Su): By 6th level, divine power is so thoroughly ingrained in the holy soldier that he can channel it as easily as he does his own inborn abilities. Once per day, should an ordinator's smite attack score a critical hit, the bonus damage from smiting is added one additional time to the damage total. Figure the damage from the critical hit normally, and then simply add the bonus damage from the smite ability (in most cases, equal to paladin level plus ordinator level). The ordinator gains an additional use of this power once every three levels.

EMPOWERED

The empowered believe just as fervently as their ordinator counterparts. But where ordinators worship the divine and rely on it to carry them above the mortal realm, the empowered place their faith in the raw abilities of the common person. They live by the belief that only will separates mortal from god. The realm of the divine is accessible to anyone if he but perseveres on the trail to attain it. Ordinators passionately serve their god to gain a taste of that power. The empowered don't wait for a gift—they hunt power down and take it for themselves.

The empowered look about their world and see creatures from other planes of existence that sometimes slay natives by the thousands, other times threaten whole communities, and yet other times ask for or demand worship. But few of these powerful beings actually make their home in this world. They toy with the lives of all who live on the Material Plane, but none are so connected to it as the mortals who dance at their whim. To the empowered, this is unacceptable. Rather than bend a knee and beg for orders from one of these removed masters, such men and women rise to the defense of their fellow mortals, sending a clear and violent message to the alien creatures that play god with their world: Go home.

This staunch rejection of deities might make the empowered sound atheistic, but many are in fact quite spiritual. Instead of investing their spiritual passion in mighty beings from elsewhere, they place their faith in the ability of mortal beings to become everything the gods are and more. More than a few engage in ancestor worship, and all revel in stories of great heroes. In many ways, the empowered are human (or humanoid) supremacists. After all, who better to rule over the world than those who dwell in it?

Hit Dice: d8.

FOR YOUR CHARACTER

Ordinators have several class abilities associated with smiting. While this ability is most often associated with paladins and blackguards, others gain it as well—and they do not always fall along alignment lines. Your ordinator might not be a champion of a particular moral cause, but rather the scourge of a chosen foe. Your DM might even relax the smiting entry requirement and allow an ardent ranger to take this class, then develop the smite ability against one or more favored enemies.

Alhough ordinators and the empowered are presented as enemies, this is not essential to their makeup. What defines these classes is devotion to their beliefs, and it's perfectly possible for your character to hold both views. Characters serving a deity that makes its home on the Material Plane could easily fill the role of both holy servant of the god and the outsider-banishing empowered. Perhaps the deity is the source of strength for the empowered as well, wishing to rid its home of all extraplanar interference. Followers of this god might even be required to take both classes, alternating as they attain levels.

Class Features

All the following are class features of the empowered prestige class.

Great Wisdom: Central to the doctrine of the empowered is the belief that the mortal will can bend the world as surely as divine, if only it grows strong enough. The empowered begins to manifest this ability at 1st level by gaining a +1 bonus to Will saves. This bonus increases by an additional +1 every three levels thereafter.

Will to Power (Ex): Already able to mold his own mind with sheer belief, the empowered now turns her attention to her body, fortifying it with willpower and the drive to transcend mortal limitations. She forces it to adapt and become more than human. At 3rd level, the empowered gains additional hit points equal to her Wisdom bonus, and again every three levels thereafter (calculated the same way).

Power of Ascendancy (Su): By 4th level, the empowered gains the ability to send a telling message to all outsiders who invade his plane, with a powerful blow that hurts them like no other. When attacking an outsider of any kind, the empowered deals an additional +1d6 damage with

FOR YOUR CAMPAIGN

Ordinators and the empowered might share common roots. For example, they might be two factions of a common order in the midst of a horrible schism, with both sides adopting extreme and opposite views. Loyalists become fanatical followers of the church, while dissenters go from objection to complete rejection of theocratic doctrine. In fact, these groups might not exist at all in your campaign to begin with but develop as the stability of an important church deteriorates. This polarization of mortal followers is a good indication that the heavens are in flux as well.

By placing a racial requirement on the empowered, you can imbue the chosen race with an inherent mysticism all its own. These people might not worship gods, but they obviously have a strong tie to some power source that runs in their blood. Attaching this to a traditionally evil race would turn them into dangerous and exciting villains, able to strike down agents of the heavens with frightening ease and to separate the devout from their gods. Of course, such scourges need special champions to deal with them. Are the ordinators specially created as the divine response to these evil beings? One of the quests for young ordinators could be discovering what grants the empowered their abilities.

In a world where the gods of evil hold sway, most ordinators would rise from the legions of blackguards, specially favored to strike down any last vestiges of purity as they lead ravening hordes over the land. The gods of good have fallen; angels and devas fear to leave their realms; Heaven will offer no aid. But something stirs within the souls of the righteous, their own innate goodness rising to meet the challenge when divine agents will not. To counter the ordinator onslaught, mortals begin ascending to the empowered, crushing demonic hosts and forcing unholy warriors to face retaliatory strikes unaided by their dark gods.

every successful strike, regardless of the weapon. This bonus damage increases by +1d6 every four levels.

Godless Ground (Su): At 5th level, the empowered's desire for a world free of outsider meddling manifests itself as more than drive. Once per day, he may sacrifice bonus damage from the power of ascendancy ability (see above) to strike a melee blow that banishes an outsider back to its home plane. The empowered must declare this strike before rolling the attack, and if the attack misses, the ability is wasted. If the attack succeeds, the outsider must make a Will save with a DC of 20 + empowered class level + 2 per damage die sacrificed. If the outsider succeeds, it ignores the banishment and is immune to further banishment attempts from the empowered for 1 month. Failure immediately sends it back to its home plane, where it is trapped for 1 month.

The empowered gains an additional use of this power per day every ten levels.

To Stand Alone (Su): The force of the empowered's beliefs becomes so strong that she gains the ability to force it on others. At 6th level, the empowered may make a melee attack against any creature or character that derives its power from an extraplanar source. This includes outsiders with innate abilities (their foreign physiologies qualify as an extraplanar source), as well as spellcasters who derive their powers from outsiders (such as many arcane prestige classes and most clerical classes). If the blow connects, the empowered and the target make opposed Will saves; should the empowered win, the target is cut off from its power for 1 day. During that time, that being must make do with its mundane abilities. The empowered may use this ability once per day and gains an additional daily use every ten levels.

EPIC IN USE

Including an epic organization (or two, as this article suggests) is easy in some ways, but it still requires more decisions about the campaign world than a less powerful organization does. Because of their extreme power, DMs should have a ready reason why each epic organization's goals haven't already been achieved. Usually, of course, this means establishing rival organizations or individuals. Such a rivialry explains why one group doesn't rule at least a large portion of the campaign world, and it provides the players with potential allies powerful enough to offer at least temporary protection should they run afoul of one of the organizations involved in the conflict. D

Dungeoncraft

DUNGEON ADVENTURES, PART I
DEFINING THE PURPOSE

by Monte Cook

It seems so utterly natural that it's almost strange to discuss dungeon crafting in a column called "Dungeoncraft." Surely everyone knows how to make a dungeon, right? Just throw some monsters into some rooms you sketch out on a piece of graph paper, and you're ready to go. Well, you *can* do that, but there are better ways to go about it.

Dungeon adventures sometimes get a bad reputation among gamers, particularly those who have been playing for a long time. Some people claim they are boring—just one monster after another. That's true, sometimes. But it's usually the result of repetitious design, lazy DMing, or players who have forgotten their mission and are just thinking of hack and slash. None of these are insurmountable problems.

What is a dungeon? It can be any layout of connected areas filled with potential dangers and rewards. In D&D terms, a dungeon doesn't even have to be underground—it's just the location of the adventure. For our purposes, however, we'll stick mostly to the traditional, subterranean rooms-and-passages kind of dungeon.

Another way to think about a dungeon-style adventure is as a set of encounters keyed to a map. The map has labels that link to descriptions of locations, including room appearance, contents, inhabitants, traps, treasure, and so on. When designing a dungeon, you can start in one of two places: with the purpose (or "things in the key") or with the map.

DUNGEON DESIGN METHOD 1: Start with the Purpose

The most obvious way to start designing a dungeon is to think about the purpose of the place. But "purpose" can have two meanings in this context, and both are important. When you ask yourself what the purpose of the dungeon is, you could mean:

1. Why did the NPCs build the dungeon?

Or you could mean:

2. What purpose does the dungeon play?

For example, you might want a dungeon that was built by goblins, carved from a natural cave system into a series of barracks, storerooms, guard posts, and meeting halls. The goblins have been staging raids on a nearby village, and the PCs need to attack the place and drive the goblins out. Thus, the purpose of the dungeon is to be a military base for the PCs to fight their way into and conquer. But another dungeon might be dire rat-infested sewers under a large city ruled by an evil tyrant. The PCs want to get into the walled city and must use this approach to sneak in. The PCs don't want to conquer the sewers; they just want to get through them.

Game World Purpose

The game world purpose determines the general layout of the dungeon and its inhabitants: Of the two examples above, the goblin base is going to be very different from the sewers. The campaign purpose also determines the kind of work you need to put into the dungeon and what details you need to stress. The PCs are likely to comb through every chamber of the goblin complex, but they're not in the sewers to explore—they probably won't pay attention to what's down there unless it gets in their way. Thus, you can detail only a small portion of the sewer system, but you'd better be ready with all the details of the goblin base. (Alternatively, the mere fact that the PCs are just passing through the sewers might be a good reason to throw in the unexpected and actually have something interesting down there—a thieves' den; a secret vault; white-skinned, eyeless lizardfolk; or something even stranger.)

There are many game world purposes for a dungeon, some more "realistic" than others. The importance of realism in your campaign is up to you, but remember that it isn't an on/off sort of decision. It is a spectrum, with varying degrees of realism. On one end, we might find rooms containing platforms floating over lakes of bubbling acid created by a thieves' guild as a test for jumping skill. On the other end, the only dungeon is a 15-foot-deep hole in the floor of the lowest level of a castle where prisoners are thrown. You just have to choose what's right for you and where your campaign fits in the spectrum.

Borders Illustrated by David Wahlstrom

Natural Caves: In many ways, natural cave systems form the most realistic sorts of dungeons. Narrow passages open into huge galleries, pools and underground streams present their own dangers, and the whole thing is a difficult-to-follow maze. Real cave systems don't teem with monsters—but this isn't reality! The D&D ecology is filled with subterranean beasts that would make their lairs in such a place.

Real caves aren't just squiggly lines drawn on a sheet of paper, however. To make your caves feel authentic, have irregular chambers and passageways that rarely have stable, level footing. Most caves are created by water, so the place should be damp, if not downright slick, with water coating everything—particularly the floor. They usually have interesting formations of flowstone, stalactites, stalagmites, and columns built by dissolved calcites dripping down. Ledges and niches provide all sorts of good ambush points. Occasionally, a passage might become a very tight space, or the ceiling drop so low that an explorer needs to crawl. The caves were created by nature, not by people, so lots of Climb and Balance checks are in order. Of course, if duergar, drow, or some other subterranean race uses the caves, they will probably be worked to be easier and safer to get around.

Dungeon-based adventures sometimes get a bad reputation among D&D players.

Subterranean Community: D&D is full of creatures and races that dwell underground. Dwarves, for example, delve deep into the earth and build fantastic cities in the dark. A dwarven city or fortress can make an interesting dungeon, particularly if abandoned. Such dungeons are very regular in their design, with central communal areas that have easy access from all other areas. They also feature repetition, with lots of chambers that serve as homes or barracks, dining halls, and so on. The unique places in such a dungeon are usually in the chambers belonging to the leaders of the community, where still-functioning traps ward treasure vaults or other interesting sites.

Tomb: This favorite among DMs owes a lot to ancient Egyptian pyramids and burial chambers. The tomb scenario usually goes something like this: Sometime in distant antiquity, a king, a priest, or a wizard wanted to "take it with him" after death. So a vast tomb complex was created where the dead could rest eternally with his great treasures. The tomb is also filled with traps and guardians to keep away grave robbers. The PCs are such robbers, who aren't intimidated by these defenses and want the loot.

As often as not, the ancient inhabitant of the tomb is now a lich, and the place teems with undead servants that still serve their master after death—a D&D classic.

Ordinary Building, Extraordinary Location: This might be a temple, forge, monastery, storehouse, mage guild, or some other such structure. The dungeon is (or once was) something that would normally be found aboveground but was built by subterranean creatures or by people wishing to hide, or being underground was just the right place for it at the time. The layout of this place is fairly utilitarian, with each room serving a purpose.

It's great to take a location with an obvious purpose, have it be in ruins, and then fill it with completely unrelated new inhabitants. The new occupants don't use the chambers for the same purposes, but both the old and new purposes for a given area are evident. Such a dungeon tells two interesting stories as the PCs explore it, those of both the current and the former residents.

Sewers: The sewers beneath a large city can provide an interesting alternative labyrinth. Of course, they're not really a maze but fairly regularly laid out. It's the very rare medieval city that even has a real sewer system, let alone one so large that adventurers can actually walk around and have fights there. But realism aside, sewers make wonderful adventure settings—they are damp, disgusting, dark, and forbidding. There's a special feeling of dread knowing that dangerous slimes and oozes, disease-ridden monstrous rat-creatures, or other deadly perils dwell in such close proximity to the residents of the city above.

To give more interesting locations for some encounters, incorporate monsters that have dug into the sides of the sewers to make rooms or chambers. To vary the layout, you can collapse portions of the sewers, or just make them as winding and irregular as the streets above.

Miscellaneous Maze: Occasionally, someone builds a dungeon just to build a dungeon. Like the minotaur's maze in Greek myth, it's a labyrinth full of dangers in which to throw one's enemies or a place for a crazy wizard to test his newest magical traps. This is probably the least believable type of dungeon. Why are so many powerful wizards enigmatic and insane? And why do all insane wizards want to build monster-and-trap-filled mazes? Use this one sparingly—but if you do use it, anything goes. Reverse gravity rooms? Check. Chessboard-based rooms where those inside have to move like chess pieces? Check. Mirrored rooms that summon intruders' evil twins? Check. Go nuts.

An Actual Dungeon: Of course, sometimes a dungeon is simply that—an actual underground chamber where prisoners are (or were) kept. Such dungeons usually have rows of cells, indicated by doors with either barred windows or small hatches, so that the guards can monitor, speak with, and pass food to those inside without having to open the door. The prison-style dungeon usually has grisly torture chambers, dank pits for throwing unruly prisoners into as punishment, guardrooms, and storage chambers where the captives' valuables are kept.

An interesting aspect to this kind of dungeon is that most if not all of the doors lock. In a large prison complex, there might be different types of keys for different areas. Perhaps one type opens the main section doors, another unlocks cell doors, and a third controls the doors that seal off various cell blocks. Thus, until they find the right kind of key, the PCs are limited to certain areas of the dungeon.

The Aboveground Dungeon: As stated earlier, not every "dungeon" is actually underground. A castle, a foundry, or any structure of appreciable size can fill the role. The only real difference is the limitation of the layout. If the PCs see the outside of the place, they have a good idea of the size and layout of the inside. Allow players to use that kind of information (and reward them for taking it into consideration), but occasionally throw them for a loop with a magical locale that is sized and shaped differently on the inside than the outside.

If desired, dungeon adventures can have both above- and below-ground settings, with a ruined castle and underground levels beneath it.

Why do all insane wizards want to build monster-and-trap-filled mazes?

Campaign Purpose

Dungeons fill many varied campaign purposes. If the game world purpose is the "setting" for the adventure, then the campaign purpose is the "plot."

Infiltrate and Recover/Destroy: Perhaps the most common sort of dungeon adventure, in this type of scenario the PCs learn that something they want (a magic item, a treasure hoard, or a kidnapped victim) or something that they hate (a villainous necromancer, an evil altar, or a gate to the Lower Planes) is in a dungeon. The PCs enter to find whatever it is. Most of the time, they don't care about searching every room or killing every monster. They have a goal, and they do what they can to reach it.

Pure Exploration: The PCs go in just to see what's inside. Usually, all they know is that there's a dungeon, where there might be treasure and there might be danger.

For this kind of adventure, you've got to have it all prepared ahead of time. You can't know which way the wandering PCs are going to go, and which rooms or areas they'll search closely and which they'll walk right by. Put in plenty of secret doors, hidden caches, and mysterious bits of information, all of which reward the PCs for curiosity and close attention to detail.

Kill 'Em All: The PCs learn of an area filled with monsters and go there to wipe them out (and take their treasure). Very basic, and very easy to prepare for. Design plenty of combat encounters, and gear the inhabitants (both in strategy and in equipment) for defense. Normally, the Challenge Rating of each individual encounter is below the level of the party so that the PCs can carve their way through a number of them before having to stop. This dungeon is often not terribly big. A good design for such a place allows the PCs to accomplish their goal (if they do well) in one foray and the players to finish in one or two sessions. Otherwise, this type of adventure can get dull due to repetition.

The Raid: Similar to the "Kill 'Em All" scenario, this dungeon is larger and has more going on. The PCs go in, see what's down there, have some encounters, get some treasure, and get out, leaving plenty more encounters for the next raid. Meanwhile, the inhabitants that are left react to the invasion (and its aftermath) and prepare for the raiders' inevitable return. While the PCs are gone, new inhabitants might move into "cleared" rooms. The whole balance of power in the dungeon might even switch if certain inhabitants have been weakened by the PC's incursion.

Although it is best to have the whole dungeon prepared in advance, if you know the PCs are only going on a raid, you need only detail what they could possibly get to in that session. This makes it much harder to determine what changes occur while the PCs are gone, however.

Just Passing Through: The PCs just need to get through the dungeon on their way to someplace else. Maybe they want to find a magical gate, which lies in a ruined wizard's lair. Or perhaps they need to get to an underground drow city, but the only path there lies through a series of caves inhabited by troglodytes.

The PCs are looking for the most direct, most expedient, or safest way through what is probably a hazardous area. In this type of dungeon you do not necessarily have to detail every chamber, only those on the way toward the goal. Of course, if the PCs are wandering and don't know the most direct route, they might go the wrong way, and you need to be prepared for that. In higher-level games, however, a PC who can cast *find the path* actually helps your preparation. If the party must travel through the forbidding and vast Castle Valakos to get to the fabled Chamber of the All-Seeing Eye, such a character will discover the quickest path. Rather than detailing every room of Castle Valakos, you can determine ahead of time what the most direct route is, and populate and describe only those areas.

Another approach is to make it very difficult to simply "pass through." Perhaps the PCs must find the controls to operate huge mechanical doors, or search through the whole complex for the password that will allow them to get through the magical wards placed on the main corridor. In this case, the "just passing through" adventure turns into a more conventional, goal-driven scenario, with the goal being the key to getting through.

The Play's the Thing

HOW TO WIN DMS AND INFLUENCE PLAYERS

by Penny Williams

You might read this article's title and conclude that it contains advice on how to suck up to your DM and become his grinning sycophant, lackey, and all-around toady—and you'd be mostly right. Let's face it: The DM is the big kahuna in the campaign, the hand of fate, the one who calls the shots. Does it pay to suck up? Does an icosahedron have twenty sides?

Fortunately you don't have to sell your soul or swallow your dignity. All you have to do is play nice and play smart. If you handle things right, you'll not only be *numero uno* with your DM; your fellow players will think you're great, too.

BRING FOOD

Everyone seems to enjoy noshing during a game, and smart players make sure the DM gets a share. Placing the goodies within reach is a subtle and great way to keep her fed without too much fuss. Champion feeders bring choice goodies such as brownies or cookies, then pass them around—always making sure the DM gets the last one (or at least first refusal on the last one).

Sometimes it's a good idea to give the DM her own supplies, so that the fingers of the exalted don't have to mingle with the baser digits of the players. In such cases, keep the dish full. Even if you haven't supplied the provender yourself, it can pay to keep it flowing to the DM in a steady stream.

ANTICIPATE AND HANDLE TROUBLE SPOTS

In days of old, the DM was often called the "referee," and with good reason: It was up to him to settle disagreements between players and keep the game moving along. A player who stays in tune with the group's mood can lend a helping hand with this important task.

When a player becomes disgruntled or unhappy, it's often best to handle the problem outside of play. It won't do to stop the game to mediate a personal dispute or collect someone's list of gripes. If a problem occurs during play, you might try creating some kind of in-game diversion. If you wonder aloud about that "strange noise" you heard in the supposedly empty corridor behind the party, people might find it hard to concentrate on interpersonal arguments. Always be sure to follow up with an out-of-game talk later on. If you don't nip the problem in the bud, you'll soon run out of effective diversions.

It's often best to keep the DM informed of your efforts in this area—especially if he is part of the problem. Be careful, however, not to become the DM's little tattletale (that infuriates players) or the leader of a coup (which will annoy your DM). Sometimes it's better to smooth any ruffled feathers and say no more about it. In any case, make it clear that your primary interest is keeping the game enjoyable. Try to offer suggestions for improvement without pointing fingers.

When friction arises from something completely outside the game, always avoid taking sides. For example, let's say two fellow players have differing opinions about a political scandal. You won't have a positive effect by injecting your own commentary into the dispute (even if you're obviously right and the other two players have clearly missed the real crux of the matter). Instead, just point out how the disagreement is hurting the game and ask those involved to call a truce for game night.

When the problem is directly related to the game, you can take a more direct approach. For example, if your party's fighter just loves to shoot a bow but can't hit the broad side of a barn, it's okay to point out the joys of melee combat.

AVOID ARGUMENTS WITH THE DM

When the DM makes what you think is a bad call, avoid scathing remarks, speculations about her ancestry, or long quotations from the rulebooks or the "Sage Advice" column. It's okay to adopt a look of crushing disappointment, and single tear running down your cheek is a good touch if you can manage it.

Most of the advice in the previous section applies equally well to disputes with the DM. Try to anticipate

arguments and deal with them ahead of time when you can. When you can't, save the fireworks until after the game.

Be prepared for trouble when you or anyone else tries something for the first time. You might know exactly how a newly acquired character ability, spell, or magic item works, and your DM probably does too. Unfortunately, there's no guarantee that you both will agree. If your character acquires some new toy in the course of the game (be it an item, spell, skill, feat, or class ability), and you've never used it with this DM before, it's best to ask her how it works before trying it during a game. The same goes for other players in similar situations, and you should gently point this out.

Likewise, if you (or a fellow player) discover something in print that leads you to believe that your group ought to start doing things differently, talk to your DM about it first. The same goes if you want to try a new tactic or combination of powers. It's a mistake to expect great results from some new trick you've dreamed up when you don't know how the DM is going to react to it.

Nobody can anticipate every problem that comes up, so be prepared to handle disappointments gracefully. When a ruling goes against you, pause a moment and gather your wits (this might be a good time for that single tear mentioned earlier). Ask for an explanation, and do so calmly. If you can relate your own expectations briefly, do so. Be prepared to try something else, and don't be afraid to ask if you can do so immediately. ("Hey, if my character knew that she'd probably just clobber the bum.") Do your best to get through the situation, then try to talk to your DM about it after the game.

While it's a good idea to keep your own arguments with the DM to a minimum, try to avoid becoming the "yes man;" nobody likes those (at least nobody admits it). Also, never go out of your way to torpedo an idea another player tries to present. Give your opinion if asked, or interject if you must, but remember that your fellow player has a right to be heard, just as you do. The final decision lies with your DM, who ought to be left to consider the matter without undue interference from you.

Let's face it: The DM is the big kahuna in the campaign, the hand of fate, the one who calls the shots.

GET ORGANIZED

Certain tasks fall to you as a player, so don't shirk them. Chief among these is keeping track of your character or characters. Have a legible and updated character sheet with you at the beginning of each playing session. Even if your DM keeps copies of every player character, don't depend on him to keep your records for you. During a game, have your own dice, writing implements, rulebooks, and paper handy, and be ready to play when the session begins.

Make a habit of recording what happens during a game session. At the very least, write down the loot you discover and the foes you defeat. It doesn't hurt to make note of the XP awards and treasure everyone gets. If you have questions about the adventure (such as who built the dungeon you're looting) write those down, too. Keep track of NPCs you meet, and get descriptions if you can.

Detailed adventure notes always prove useful down the line. If nothing else, they can help you get a handle on your character's memories—an invaluable aid to role-playing. They also can help settle future disputes ("No, the +3 longbow went to the elf"), keep track of important clues ("Hey gang, this holy symbol looks just like the one from the Temple of Neardoom!"), and spot future developments in the storyline ("Wow, that's the eighth potion of water breathing we've found in the last two weeks—maybe we shouldn't sell this one").

But good organization goes beyond note-taking. When possible, try to get some agreement on what your group would like to accomplish before the session starts, so you don't bore your DM with a long debate among the players. Likewise, keep track of your party's favorite marching order, watch schedule, spell lists, and standard operating procedures.

Using an standard operating procedure helps save time and keeps the game moving. You can develop one for any task your party undertakes repeatedly. For example, your group's standard operating procedure when encountering a closed door might go something like this: The rogue checks for traps, then listens at the door, then checks to see if the door is locked. She tries to disable any traps found before listening, and reports anything heard before checking the lock. She might take 10 on the Search checks to locate traps, roll for any necessary Disable Device checks, and take 10 on Listen checks.

PROMOTE ACTIVE USE OF THE PARTY'S RESOURCES

If you've been keeping notes about what the party has gained, you'll have some idea of what tools are at your disposal when something unusual comes up. The timely expenditure of magic or mundane supplies can help bring a quick end to an encounter that might otherwise drag on for a long time, and it might also save someone's bacon.

For example, suppose you're beset by a swarm of vampire spawn who use cracks in a dungeon's walls to surround and harass your group. You could

engage in an extended series of turn undead attempts to keep the pests at bay, but you're better off sealing the area somehow, whether with a well-placed *wall of force* from a scroll your wizard carries or by using some garlic and candle wax.

You might use up something you don't really need to, but unused items kept in an ever-growing stockpile don't do any good. Don't waste time or risk permanent injury just to save a few gold pieces.

LEARN FROM YOUR ADVENTURES

Keep on the lookout for situations that repeatedly defeat, frustrate, or work to the detriment of your group, then take steps to deal with those situations more effectively the next time they come up. Who knows—maybe your DM is trying to tell you something.

Bring the problem to the attention of your fellow players and try to invent a solution together. For example, perhaps you have one party member who loves to scout ahead—*way* ahead—and this character invariably gets jumped by groups of monsters that would be quick work for your whole group, but always rip the lone character to shreds.

You might deal with this problem by resolving to stick together in the future, or perhaps the party wizard could reconnoiter ahead using a spell or conjure up some reinforcements to send along with the scout. The group might pitch in to get the scout some method of quick escape, such as a teleportation device, or try to keep tabs on him somehow (perhaps with *scrying* or *arcane eye*) and devise a plan for going quickly to his aid, perhaps using *teleportation circle* or a few *dimension door* spells.

Does it pay to suck up to your DM? Does an icosahedron have twenty sides?

KNOW THE CAMPAIGN

If you're the kind of player who likes to pore over the rulebooks, or if you're a veteran in a group of relative newcomers, make an effort to keep your knowledge to yourself until the appropriate time.

You might know that formians are resistant to sonic attacks, but if your character has never met a formian, keep your mouth shut—at least until the other players have a chance to discover that fact on their own.

If your DM is using a published campaign world such as the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting,* resist the urge to become an expert on the setting who rattles off a string of corrections and obscure facts every session. If you already know the setting well, use your knowledge to create a believable character, one who knows what a reasonably well-informed citizen of the world might know. In any case, let the other players in your group discover the world for themselves, and never argue with your DM about minor details that have nothing to do with the campaign. For example, if you know that a certain city lies to the west of the nearest river, don't throw a fit if the DM says it's to the east. (For all you know, she could have moved the city or the river deliberately.)

Many DMs create original campaign settings. If you're playing in one of these, try to learn all you can about it (short of peeking into the campaign notes). Chances are your DM will be only too happy to oblige you. After all, most characters are professional adventurers and know a thing or two about what lies over the next hill. You can make your inquiries in character, or you can ask your DM to provide some basic information in the form of campaign notes or a short document. Typical things you can expect your character to know include: the names of states or countries that border the area where your adventures take place; the names of major local landmarks (rivers, mountains, forests, and the like); the names and reputations of local government and military officials; the names of famous people who live (or once lived) in the area; major historical events that occurred in or affect the area; the names of prominent (or feared) deities; the names and locations of nearby temples, towns, cities, and other civilized or settled areas; the local industries (if any); and the state of the local economy.

CULTIVATE RELATIONSHIPS WITH NPCS

Even in campaigns where most NPCs are cardboard cutouts, there will be at least a few special characters the DM has developed in more depth. It pays to recognize such characters and make use of them when you can; doing so gives the DM a chance to play a recurring role and might well provide you and your group with reliable information and perhaps a badly needed ally when things get rough. You should not depend on these NPCs to bail you out every time you get into trouble, but don't forget about them either. You can use them to get the local gossip, check on the accuracy of information you've gained from less reliable sources, and add some depth to your own characters.

PROVIDE AND USE ADVENTURE HOOKS

From time to time, your DM will introduce adventures to you by way of a "hook," often a simple statement or bit of information that sets the stage for the adventure. Be alert for adventure hooks, and be ready to check them out when they come along. You don't have to follow up on every one, but it doesn't pay to be too picky either. If you don't take the hook, chances are nothing will happen in the game.

One of the best ways to keep things from grinding to

a halt when you decide to pass up an adventure hook is to provide your DM with a few hooks of your own. Your character might have some sort of hobby, such as collecting rare books, or an obscure interest, such as dead religions. Perhaps your character has a dark secret or an archrival. Your DM could easily build adventures around any of these, and if so, you'll occasionally have the pleasure of engaging in an adventure that's all about your character.

KEEP THINGS ON THE LEVEL

Being the consummately skilled roleplayer that you are, you'd never think of fudging a die roll, "forgetting" to mark off a magic item you've used up, or making a quick alteration to a list of prepared spells, would you? Of course not. If you were to do so, you would be interfering with the very fabric of the world in which your character lives and manipulating the world's reality in a way that you are not entitled to do.

Players who cheat do more than just give themselves a break—they also rob others of their chances to save the day, and they prevent both the DM and the other players from observing the unbiased results of an encounter and learning from them. And that's only if they don't get caught.

Players who get caught cheating invite derision from the other players and inspire deep mistrust in the DM (in case you forgot, this article covers ways to make the DM adore you). Good players not only let the dice fall where they may, but they make sure their fellow players do so as well.

Set a good example by keeping your die rolls more or less in the middle of the gaming table where they won't fall off the edge (but not where they will knock over figures or land in books, snacks, or other paraphernalia). Wait a few seconds before picking up your dice so everybody gets a good look at the roll. Encourage other players to do the same. Should you catch another player cheating, don't make a scene, but either discuss the episode with your fellow players after the game or bring it to the DM's attention (perhaps both). When doing so, follow the advice in the section on handling trouble spots—this is a *big* one.

A FEW WORDS IN CONCLUSION

So, your DM is well fed, everybody's eager to play, nobody's planning to be a rules lawyer, you have all your stuff together, and you and your fellow players have a plan for the night. Everything is guaranteed to come out great, right? Well, no—but you will have done all you can to help create a quality play experience.

Keep in mind that it's possible to overdo the advice presented here. Mae West once said: "Too much of a good thing can be wonderful!" But (in all likelihood) she isn't your DM, so go easy. You don't have to spoil him, name your firstborn child after him, or leave gifts of cash behind the screen. A little tender loving care is all your DM craves. D

Of Gods and Henchmen
Two New Collections
Livin' La Vida Dorka!
The Nodwick Chronicles II
Of Gods and Henchmen
DORK STORM
Ask your game or comic retailer to carry your favorite titles from Dork Storm Press!
www.dorkstorm.com
HUZ-
FREAKIN'
-ZAH!
LIVIN' LA VIDA DORKA
By John Kovalic
The complete DORK TOWER comic strip collection, Vol. 1

The Nodwick Chronicles, Volume Two continues the saga of Nodwick the Henchman and his adventurer employers! Thrill as they battle evil deities, unravel the mysteries of alternate dimensions, grapple with cosmic power and delve into the dankest dungeons! Collecting issues 7 through 12 of the fan-favorite comic book, this volume is a must-have for hench-heads everywhere! Only $15.95, on sale this summer!

At last! ALL the DORK TOWER comic strips from *Scrye Magazine*, *Gamespy.com* and *Interactive Week*, collected together for the first time in a beautiful trade paperback that just screams **"IT MUST BE MINE!"** Most of this collection has never been reprinted before! As *USA Today* said, "Lighten up with some fun 'toons courtesy of the prolific John Kovalic!" Just $15.95 for this tome of hilarity!

Sage Advice

WEAPONS, FEATS, ITEMS, AND SPELLS OFFICIAL ANSWERS

by Skip Williams

This month the Sage tackles questions about combat and other related issues.

The descriptions of the light and heavy crossbows say that they both require two hands for reloading. The descriptions of the hand crossbow and repeating crossbow say nothing about reloading with two hands. Does this mean that a character only needs one hand to reload a hand crossbow or repeating crossbow?

Reloading any crossbow normally takes two hands. In some cases, a character might contrive to reload using only one hand, probably by making some kind of arrangement to hold the crossbow steady while cocking the weapon and fitting a bolt. Doing so should take an extra full-round action.

If I use the Energy Substitution feat to make a sonic *fireball*, will the spell deal damage to creatures that are deaf? Or must the recipient be able to hear the effect?

You don't have to be able to hear to take sonic damage (which can literally vibrate you to pieces). A magical *silence* effect, however, negates all sonic attacks.

Can you hold throwing weapons in your off hand so that you don't have to use an action to draw them? If so, how many skiprocks (or daggers, shurikens, darts, bullets, and so on) can be held "drawn" in an off-hand by a Small or Medium-size character?

Sure, you can hold a few throwing weapons in one hand so they're ready to throw without a separate action to draw them. When holding multiple weapons in your hand (or a single weapon too large for you to wield in one hand) you can't use the weapons to attack, nor can you do anything else with that hand.

Bullets are ammunition and don't have to be drawn. The other weapons on your list are thrown weapons and have to be drawn (except that skiprocks can be used with a sling as ammunition). Refer to the table below:

Weapon Size*	Number Held	Extra Shafted Weapons**
One size larger	1	—
Your size	1	+2
One size smaller	2	+2
Two or more sizes smaller	3	+2

*In relation to your size

**Spears, javelins, darts, and other weapons with fairly skinny shafts, but not weapons with fairly thick hafts such as axes.

Assuming you have several thrown weapons together in a pouch, can you scoop up several of them simultaneously as one move-equivalent action (or free action with the Quick Draw feat)?

Loading up your hand with more than one weapon is a full-round action.

Given two rogues, one of whom has a reach weapon and is 10 feet away from an opponent, and the other of whom is in melee on the opposite side of the opponent, do both rogues qualify for sneak attacks due to flanking, or only the one with the reach weapon? What if a rogue is armed with a ranged weapon?

You can get a flanking bonus—and provide an ally with a flanking bonus—with a reach weapon, but not with a ranged weapon.

Suppose an ally of mine is attacking one foe, then I somehow become invisible, draw my sword, and move to the other side of that foe, thus flanking the foe. Does my ally still get a flanking bonus even if I am invisible?

You get a flanking bonus from any ally your foe can see (and who is in the correct position to flank). If your foe can't see you, you don't provide a flanking bonus to any ally.

Borders Illustrated by David Wahlstrom

Sharp readers will note that this means you cannot flank a blind creature; however, truly blind creatures are effectively flanked already (they can't use their Dexterity bonus to AC and you at +2 to attack them). Creatures with the blindsight ability effectively "see" within blindsight range, and can be flanked.

The order of the bow initiate prestige class has a class ability called close combat shot that lets a character fire a ranged weapon while threatened by an opponent without provoking an attack of opportunity. Can a character using this ability claim or provide a flanking bonus while using this ability?

No. Nor does the character threaten the area around him. The character cannot use his ranged weapon to make attacks of opportunity against foes.

Is it possible to regain concentration on a spell once you lose concentration? What happens if a spell lasts a while after concentration ceases (*hypnotic pattern,* for example)? Could you conceivably stop and restart concentration as long the spell has not ended? What about if you're hasted, could you use an action to concentrate and an action to do something else?

If a spell's duration depends on your concentration, you cannot regain concentration on the spell once you lose concentration, even when the spell doesn't end immediately when your concentration ceases or is broken.

Concentrating to maintain a spell requires a standard action on your turn. As long as you spend that standard action, you can take other actions, time permitting. If you're entitled to an extra action, as you would be after receiving a *haste* spell, you're free to use that action. You also could use the partial action from *haste* to maintain concentration and use your normal actions for other things.

Concentrating on a spell typically requires a standard action. You can never regain concentration on a spell once it is lost.

Suppose you cast a spell against someone with spell resistance, a *rod of absorption,* and a *spell turning* effect. Which acts on the spell first?

The caster makes a level check to overcome spell resistance first. If the spell fails to penetrate the spell resistance, it still can be turned or absorbed, but it cannot affect the creature. A spell that has been absorbed cannot also be turned, nor can a spell that has been fully turned be absorbed. A spell that has been partially turned can be absorbed as though its level were the same as the spell levels that were not turned. The spell recipient decides whether to resolve absorption or spell turning first.

Is it possible to activate a *karma* bead from a *necklace of prayer beads* while wearing a *periapt of wisdom +2?*

No, both the necklace and the periapt occupy the same item location on the user's body. You'd have to take off the periapt before putting on the necklace, or vice versa.

The Heighten Spell metamagic feat actually changes a spell's level, correct? Does this mean you can use the feat to make your spells bypass wards like *minor globe of invulnerability?*

Yes. The Heighten Spell description specifically mentions overcoming a *minor globe of invulnerability.* To do so, one would have to Heighten the spell to 4th level or higher, you'd need to have a 4th-level or higher spell slot available, and your ability score that governs your spellcasting would have to be at least 14. As "Sage Advice" has pointed out before, when you use a higher-level spell slot to cast a lower-level spell, you normally need an ability score only high enough to cast the spell at its base (unmodified by metamagic) level. But Heighten Spell is a special case because it actually changes the spell's level.

Can you use the feats Heighten Spell and Improved Counterspell to counter just about any spell? Improved Counterspell allows you to use a spell of a higher level from the same school to counterspell, and Heighten Spell actually changes a spell's level (unlike most other metamagic feats), it would seem that using these two together works to counter darn near anything, especially if you are a sorcerer or bard and you manage to learn at least one spell of each school (which wouldn't be hard). If this is possible, could a sorcerer or bard use heightened spells as improved counterspells, or is that impossible because a character must ready a counterspell. The ready action triggers a standard action, but sorcerer or bard needs a full-round action to cast a spell altered by metamagic.

You can indeed use Heighten Spell to make a spell useful with the Improved Counterspell feat; as noted in the previous answer, Heighten Spell actually increases the affected spell's level.

The counterspell action is always a standard action that must be readied (see the Counterspell section in Chapter 10 of the *Player's Handbook*), no matter what the actual casting time of the spell being used as a

counterspell actually happens to be.

A sorcerer or bard could indeed counter almost any spell using a combination of Heighten Spell and Improved Counterspell, but keep in mind that a successful counterspell still must be readied in advance (which means you'll spend a whole lot of time waiting around for your opponents to act if you decide to use counterspells regularly), and you still have to successfully identify your opponent's spell with a Spellcraft check before you can attempt a counterspell.

Let's say my fighter has a Dexterity score of 16 and wears *+3 full plate armor.* If a creature makes a touch attack against her, what is her Dexterity modifier to Armor Class? What is her Dexterity modifier for other purposes, such as initiative or Reflex saves? Do I use the +3 bonus for her Dexterity score or do I use +1 because that's the maximum Dexterity bonus the armor allows? What if my character is carrying a load heavy enough to reduce her Dexterity bonus?

The example character's Dexterity bonus to Armor Class is +1, because of the armor's maximum Dexterity rating. The maximum applies to any attack the character suffers, even when the armor itself doesn't help against the attack.

The character's Dexterity bonus for all other purposes, including initiative rolls and Reflex saves remains +3. The maximum Dexterity bonus from armor applies only to Armor Class.

Maximum Dexterity from a load a character carries works just like maximum Dexterity from armor. It only affects Armor Class (see Carrying Capacity in Chapter 9 of the *Player's Handbook*).

When my character is subjected to a touch attack, exactly what elements of my character's usual Armor Class apply? If I'm wearing magical armor, does the armor's enhancement bonus help my character?

Touch attacks ignore armor bonuses, natural armor bonuses, and armor bonuses from shields. Everything else that contributes to your character's Armor Class still applies. That list includes: your size modifier to Armor Class, your Dexterity modifier, any deflection bonus, any dodge bonuses, the Armor Class bonus form a *haste* spell, any luck bonus to Armor Class, any insight bonus to Armor Class, any profane bonus to Armor Class, and any scared bonus to Armor Class, and any cover bonus to Armor Class you might have.

Enhancement bonuses to your armor or to your shield make the armor bonuses these items give you bigger, and they don't apply to touch attacks.

Exactly what kind of Armor Class bonus do *bracers of armor* provide?

They provide an armor bonus. Although it is not specifically mentioned in the item description, the bracers produce a force effect, and are effective against incorporeal touch attacks.

Just what is the difference between a touch attack and an incorporeal touch attack? Aren't they just two names for the same thing?

An incorporeal touch attack usually is natural weapon attack that a creature with the incorporeal subtype uses. It most cases, it resembles a slam attack. Like a touch attack, however, an incorporeal touch attack ignores most armor and natural armor bonuses, including armor bonuses from shields (because the blow passes right through armor as though it wasn't there at all).

Bracers of armor create a force effect and provide an armor bonus that defends against incorporeal touch attacks.

Unlike a touch attack, an incorporeal touch attack ignores most cover bonuses because it can just pass right through any object that might lie between the attacker and the target.

Also unlike a touch attack, an incorporeal touch attack does not ignore armor bonuses from force effects, such as the *mage armor* spell or *bracers of armor.* For example, a wizard wearing *+2 bracers of armor,* a *+2 ring of protection,* and a *+2 amulet of natural armor* normally has an Armor Class of 16. Against a touch attack, the wizard's Armor Class is 12 (only the +2 deflection from the *ring of protection* applies). Against an incorporeal touch attack, the wizard's Armor Class is 14; the +2 deflection bonus applies and so does the +2 armor bonus from the bracers because they produce a force effect.

Does any level of concealment prevent a rogue from using sneak attack, or does it have to be total concealment? Can the *true strike* spell negate that? What about a miss chance that doesn't come from concealment, such as the 50% miss chance from the *blink* spell?

If your opponent has enough concealment to impose a miss chance on you, you can't make sneak attacks against that opponent. If you somehow negate the opponent's miss chance for concealment, such as by using a *true strike* spell, you can sneak attack that opponent.

Miss chances that don't rely on concealment, such as the miss chance from the *blink* spell, don't prevent sneak attacks. Concealment negates sneak attacks by interfering with your ability to study the foe's anatomy

and place an attack in precisely the right place. The *blink* spell does not interfere with your ability to make a precise attack, although it can foil your whole attack by whisking your foe out of harm's way before you can land a blow. Note that *true strike* doesn't negate the miss chance from a *blink* spell.

When two opponents are grappling and occupying the same square, what happens if a character attacks one of the grapplers? Is the roll subject to any chances of hitting either grappler, as is the case of attacking character in the middle of a bull rush? Nothing is clearly stated on the subject and any information you may give would be greatly appreciated.

There currently is no chance to strike the wrong target when you attack someone involved in a grapple with a melee attack. Many DMs I know give you an equal chance to strike any of the creatures involved in a grapple whenever you strike at grapplers (for example, if there are two grapplers, you have a 50% chance to strike one or the other). If one grappler is of sufficient size, you can attack a part of that grapple that is at least 10 feet from where the grappling is actually taking place without any chance of striking the wrong target, just as you can shoot 10 feet away from a melee to avoid the attack penalty for shooting into a melee.

There are no rules for accidentally striking the wrong creature when aiming a melee attack against a creature involved in a grapple.

If two characters are engaged in a grapple and the attacker fails his opposed grapple check against the defender, what happens? Does the grapple simply continue, with the defender is unable to respond because it is not his turn? Or does the defender escape when the attacker fails his grapple check?

Once a grappler establishes a hold, he maintains the hold until he releases the defender or until the defender escapes. The attacker must move into defender's space to establish or maintain the hold.

When it's not the defender's turn, the defender can't do anything to affect the attacker or to escape from the grapple, although the defender probably will make some opposed grapple checks to resolve the attacker's grappling actions.

A *sun blade* deals double damage (and ×3 on a critical hit instead of the usual ×2) against creatures from the Negative Energy Plane. This implies the *sun blade* can critical hit an undead. Is that true? If so, can a rogue using the sword make sneak attacks against undead creatures? Can a ranger can use his favored enemy bonus against undead creatures? Also, when dealing double damage, what gets doubled and how? Do you roll damage once and double everything? Or do you just roll damage twice?

You can't inflict a critical hit on an undead creature, even with a *sun blade,* nor can you make sneak attacks against undead creatures or use the ranger's favored enemy bonus against them.

To get the ×3 critical with the *sun blade*, you have to use the weapon against a negative energy creature that is susceptible to critical hits, such as an outsider or magical beast.

When dealing double damage to an undead or negative energy creature, roll all damage (including all your normal damage bonuses and the sword's +4 bonus against evil creatures, if applicable) twice. Note that the reason the sword deals a ×3 critical against negative energy creatures is because it's dealing double damage (when you double a double, you get a triple, see Multiplying on page 275 of the *Player's Handbook*).

Can a rogue use a sneak attack while charging and when her enemy is flat footed? Suppose I have a Small rogue and I ride into battle on a riding dog. Can I use a light lance to make a sneak attack? If I charge, the lance deals double damage. Is my sneak attack damage doubled, too?

Any melee attack (or ranged attack from a distance of 30 feet or less) can be a sneak attack, no matter what weapon you use. Some things (such as concealment) prevent sneak attacks, but charging isn't one of them.

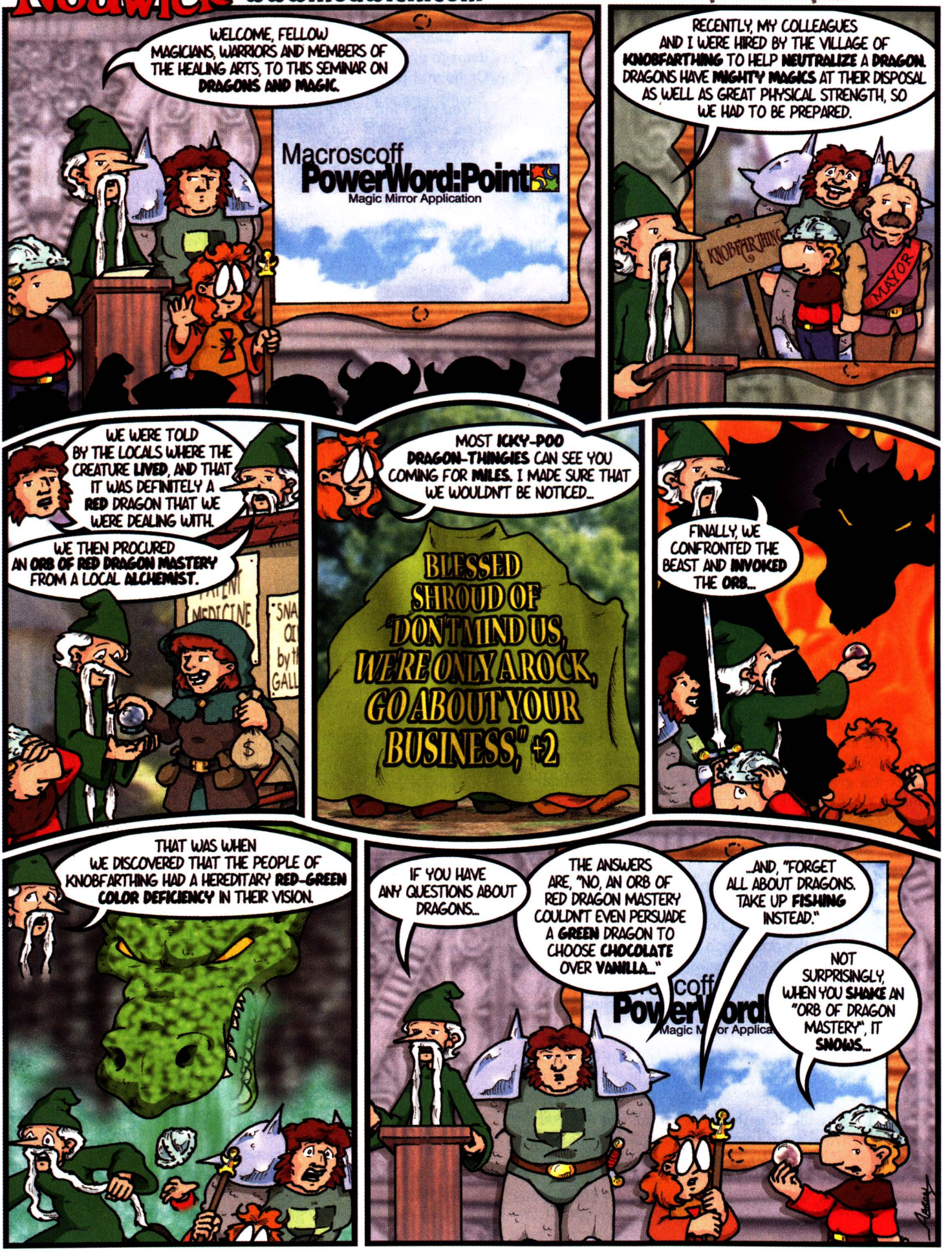
When you deal double damage with a lance in a charge attack, do not double sneak attack damage or any damage expressed as extra dice.

Email your questions to the Sage at **tsrsage@aol.com.**

Nodwick

by Aaron Williams
www.nodwick.com

A Dungeon Master's best twit filter is a large Red Dragon.


WELCOME, FELLOW MAGICIANS, WARRIORS AND MEMBERS OF THE HEALING ARTS, TO THIS SEMINAR ON DRAGONS AND MAGIC.
Macroscoff
PowerWord:Point
Magic Mirror Application
RECENTLY, MY COLLEAGUES AND I WERE HIRED BY THE VILLAGE OF KNOBFARTHING TO HELP NEUTRALIZE A DRAGON. DRAGONS HAVE MIGHTY MAGICS AT THEIR DISPOSAL AS WELL AS GREAT PHYSICAL STRENGTH, SO WE HAD TO BE PREPARED.
KNOBFARTHING
MAYOR
WE WERE TOLD BY THE LOCALS WHERE THE CREATURE LIVED, AND THAT IT WAS DEFINITELY A RED DRAGON THAT WE WERE DEALING WITH.
WE THEN PROCURED AN ORB OF RED DRAGON MASTERY FROM A LOCAL ALCHEMIST.
PATENT MEDICINE
MOST ICKY-POO DRAGON-THINGIES CAN SEE YOU COMING FOR MILES. I MADE SURE THAT WE WOULDN'T BE NOTICED...
BLESSED SHROUD OF "DON'T MIND US, WE'RE ONLY A ROCK, GO ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS," +2
FINALLY, WE CONFRONTED THE BEAST AND INVOKED THE ORB...
THAT WAS WHEN WE DISCOVERED THAT THE PEOPLE OF KNOBFARTHING HAD A HEREDITARY RED-GREEN COLOR DEFICIENCY IN THEIR VISION.
IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT DRAGONS...
THE ANSWERS ARE, "NO, AN ORB OF RED DRAGON MASTERY COULDN'T EVEN PERSUADE A GREEN DRAGON TO CHOOSE CHOCOLATE OVER VANILLA..."
...AND, "FORGET ALL ABOUT DRAGONS. TAKE UP FISHING INSTEAD."
NOT SURPRISINGLY, WHEN YOU SHAKE AN "ORB OF DRAGON MASTERY", IT SNOWS...

PHIL FOGLIO'S WHAT'S NEW WITH PHIL & DIXIE

AND THEN ~ THEY WOKE UP.
WAUG!!
WHAT HAPPENED?!
YOU WERE EVIL!
YOU WERE EVIL FIRST!
NO-I WAS GOOD-I THINK...
YOU'RE WEARING EVIL SORCERESS LINGERIE AND THIGH-HIGH BOOTS
WELL, YEAH, I FEEL NORMAL NOW.
I THINK SOMEONE MESSED WITH OUR ALIGNMENTS.
WHY?
WHY DOES ANYTHING EVER HAPPEN TO US?
AH-CHEAP LAUGHS.
ALIGNMENT IS VERY POWERFUL. IT DETERMINES WHO YOU'RE FRIENDS WITH, WHO YOU FIGHT, WHO YOU WORSHIP, AND WHO PAYS YOU.
EVIL, YES, BUT HIS CHECKS ARE GOOD.
DON'T RUB IT IN.
MINION
GETTING THEIR ALIGNMENT SWITCHED CAN COMPLETELY CHANGE A PERSON'S LIFE.
-AND SUDDENLY I REALIZED THAT ALL WE DID WAS BILK MONEY OUT OF THE STUPID AND CREDULOUS. I...I COULDN'T DO IT ANYMORE. I FELT SO UNCLEAN.
JEEZ, DAT'S TOO BAD, YER HOLINESS.
THE BIGGEST PROBLEM IS IN THE PERIOD WHEN ALL YOUR FRIENDS KNOW YOU'VE CHANGED, BUT YOUR ENEMIES STILL HATE YOU.
EVERYONE I KNOW HATES ME.
I DON'T HATE YOU.
YOU DON'T KNOW ME.
SO WHO ARE YOU?
ZOGBAR, THE LOUD.
DUDE! I DO KNOW YOU!
YEAH?
YEAH! I TOTALLY HATE YOU!
GETTING ONE'S ALIGNMENT CHANGED IS VERY RARE. USUALLY IT'S CAUSED BY MAGIC, THOUGH IT CAN HAPPEN SPONTANEOUSLY.
WHY... I FEEL AS IF I HAVE AWAKENED FROM A BAD DREAM.
I WILL NEVER BE BAD AGAIN.
THE BEST WAY TO DEAL WITH IT IS TO PRETEND THAT UP TO NOW, YOU WERE DRUNK.
MINIONS? I DIDN'T HIRE ANY MINIONS! WHAT? I GAVE THEM REFERENCES?
I WAS WEARING WHAT?!
... HOW'D IT LOOK?
DESTROYED A TOWN? UNLEASHED DRAGONS?! KIDNAPPED THE ROYAL FAMILY?!!
... urm... HE MOVED.
WHERE? AH-TO... DEATH. YES, HE'S COMPLETELY DEAD. YES, WE'RE GLAD TOO. GOODBYE MOM UH-MA'AM!
©PFoglio-03

Buy our books or read FREE comics at our Web site:
www.airshipbooks.com

This month's colors were done by the ever-fabulous Cheyenne Wright. Thanks, Cheyenne!